

Japanese Architecture since 1950, Plural Spaces

20 May – 19 September 2022

Since 1950, the Japanese architectural scene has been shaped by a dialogue between modernity and tradition, between references to the West and research into a specifically Japanese culture. In order to better grasp its historical variety and contemporary vitality, this exhibition is organised around themes that Japanese architects have never ceased to explore, questioning the way architecture is inscribed in the city and how it links people to their urban environment.

Through a series of catastrophes caused by earthquakes and economic crises, Japanese cities have been marked by a permanent to-and-fro movement between destruction and creation. They have established a reputation as perpetually mutating matrices, enabling them to give life to the visions of architects who are constantly renewing the definition of architecture itself. Providing a veritable field for experimentation, the Japanese urban fabric is characterised by its division into plural spaces that are enriched by ruptures and continuities.

The exhibition presents a chronological tour divided into five sections ranging from the 1950s to the present day, showcasing projects by some thirty architects and enabling us to grasp the profusion and diversity of Japanese architecture, design and urban planning.

Works by Japanese architects in Spain

Arata Isozaki, Puerta Isozaki, Bilbao, 2009. Photo: Toshiaki Tange. Courtesy of Arata Isozaki & Associates Co., Ltd.



Arata Isozaki, Palau Sant Jordi, Barcelone, 1990. Photo: Yasuhiro Ishimoto



Arata Isozaki, Domus-Casa del Hombre, A Coruña, 1995. Photo: Toshiaki Tange. Courtesy of Arata Isozaki & Associates Co., Ltd.



Toyo Ito, Extension of the Fira de Barcelona Gran Vía, L'Hospitalet de Llobregat, 2007

Toyo Ito, Façade renovation of the Suites Avenue apartments, Barcelona, 2009



Arata Isozaki, D38 Offices, Barcelona, 2011. Photo: Toshiaki Tange. Courtesy of Arata Isozaki & Associates Co., Ltd.



Toyo Ito, Porta Fira Towers, L'Hospitalet de Llobregat, 2010. Photo: Toyo Ito & Associates, Architects



Shigeru Ban, Paper Pavilion of the IE Business School, Madrid, 2013. Photo: Fernando Guerra

Emergence of Modern Japanese Architecture

Japanese architecture developed in close relationship with western modernism, particularly through the 1930s writings of the German Bruno Taut, in which he compared European architecture and traditional Japanese constructions. Yasuhiro Ishimoto's photographs show the influence of Taut's analysis in characterising modern Japanese architecture.

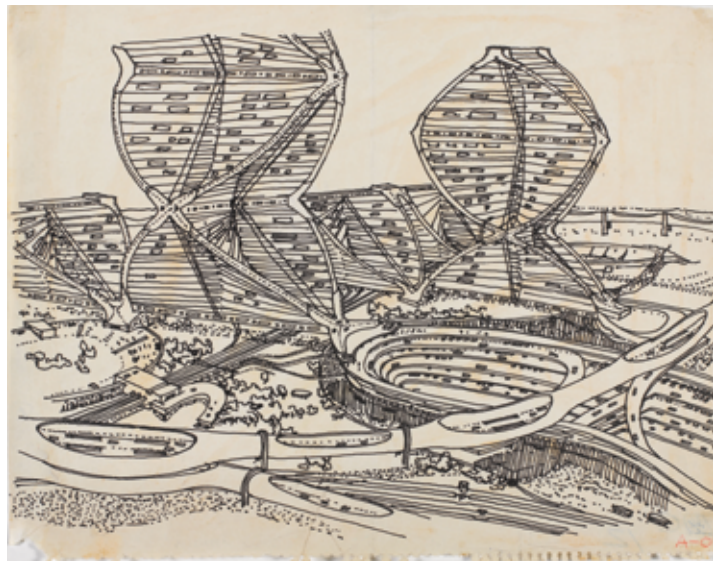
The impact of World War II on Japan through destruction and the possible eradication of humanity by nuclear weapons in turn provoked a response with a new form of humanism, which is highlighted in projects like the Kenzo Tange's Peace Center (1952-1955) in Hiroshima.

This interrogation on the place of humans also inspired the Japanese architects who were influenced by Le Corbusier. They developed an all-concrete Brutalist style and endowed cities with spaces on a human dimension, prioritising collective buildings and contributing to the efforts to reconstruct the country.

From 1955 onward, the meteoric economic growth of the country led to many construction projects. The international style came to the fore, notably with Junzo Sakakura and Ichiro Ebihara. With the construction of the Yoyogi National Stadium for the Tokyo Olympic Games in 1964, Kenzo Tange became the emblematic architect of this period.



① Kenzo Tange, Yamanashi Communication Center, 1961-1966. Model © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI/ Jean-Claude Planchet/Dist. RMN-GP



Kisho Kurokawa, Helix City Project, Tokyo, 1961. Unrealized project © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI/ Georges Meguerditchian/Dist. RMN-GP

Futuristic Visions: the Metabolist Group and Expo 70 in Osaka

The 1960s saw the emergence of a new urbanism adapted to the increasing human density of Japanese cities. Architects liberated space by extending or rising on a large scale, as in Kiyonori Kikutake's projects for marine cities and Arata Isozaki's aerial megastructures. The protagonists of the Metabolist group, such as Kisho Kurokawa and Kikutake went against the excessively prescriptive spirit of modernism by imagining urban projects consisting of extensible structures and renewable components based on biological processes.

Japanese major cities became showcases for these futuristic visions and this technological prosperity, as evidenced in Tange's Yamanashi Communications Center (1966) and Kurokawa's Nakagin Capsule Tower (1972). The Osaka World Expo in 1970 was emblematic of this technological architecture. It highlighted megastructures on an international scale, but also Yutaka Murata's inflatable architecture. The optimism associated with industrial society was nevertheless shattered at this event by the actions of artists like Tadanori Yokoo.

Redefining Architecture: Cities and Houses

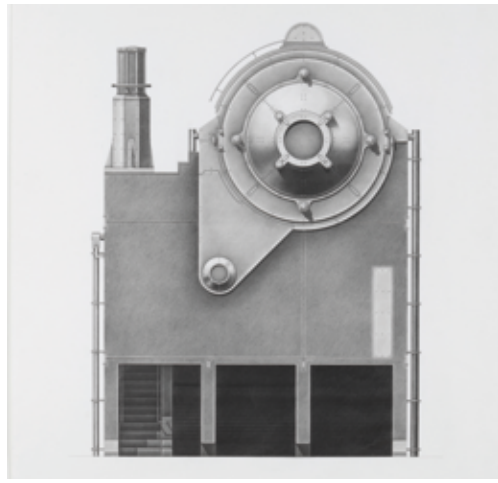
In the context of protest movements in 1968 and the 1973 oil crisis, many architects returned to elementary architectural principles, reimagining modest houses.

Kazuo Shinohara and Arata Isozaki relied on the concepts of tradition and modernity in imagining private dwellings and cities. Based on his research into traditional Japanese houses, Shinohara developed a vocabulary based on geometric abstraction. Isozaki presented a new conception of urbanism adapted to contemporary life but detached from modern principles. He redefined cities as spaces consisting of an accumulation of signs and out of this he derived the key concept of *Ma*, which refers in Japanese architecture to the interstices in the midst of urban density.

Inspired by their research, the new generation reinvented the links between humans and cities. Houses enable a recentering on the individual, as in Takamitsu Azuma's Tower House (1966), constructed in the interstices of the urban fabric of Tokyo. The 1970s saw the development of geometric forms on Tadao Ando's concrete walls and Itsuko Hasegawa's sleek structures. Other architects inscribed signs and symbols in cities: buildings were transformed into graphical supports, as evidenced in Kazumasa Yamashita's anthropomorphism and Kiko Mozuna's motifs inspired by Eastern thought.



② Kazumasa Yamashita, Face House, Kyoto, 1974. Model © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI/Georges Meguerditchian/ Dist. RMN-GP



③ Shin Takamatsu, Ark, Dental Clinic, Kyoto, 1983. East side elevation © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI/Audrey Laurans/ Dist. RMN-GP

Architecture as Concept and Language

In the 1970s, Japanese architects opened up to new western trends like radical architecture and postmodernism. Inspired by philosophical concepts, they adopted a new principle: architecture as language.

Hiromi Fujii's work was nurtured by dialogue with the West: influenced by structuralist thinking, he rejected expressiveness and established the grid as a fundamental element. Tadao Ando enriched his geometry with reflections on phenomenality, the interaction between matter and light, body and space.

The speculative bubble of the 1980s and 1990s generated a new boom in architectural typologies in Japan. Architects sought alternatives in a context of intensified transport and the advent of new technologies. Architecture was sometimes transformed into an autonomous machine, as with Shin Takamatsu, who created a hypermodern world. Atsushi Kitagawara and Ryoji Suzuki adopted more conceptual approaches, inserting their architecture into interstitial urban spaces.

Itsuko Hasegawa developed a synthesis between research into sleek dwellings and experimentation with new materials and technologies. She invented the «Light Architecture», characterised by the use of light materials like metal netting. This taste for erasure culminated with Toyo Ito, who designed openwork structures and furniture adapted to new trends in urban life.

An architecture of Erasure

The 1990s marked a turning point in the practice of Japanese architects. The socio-economic context (the Kobe earthquake in 1995, economic stagnation) led them to consolidate the social dimension of architecture. Materiality became lighter, walls disappeared, promoting a diversity of circulation, uses and publics.

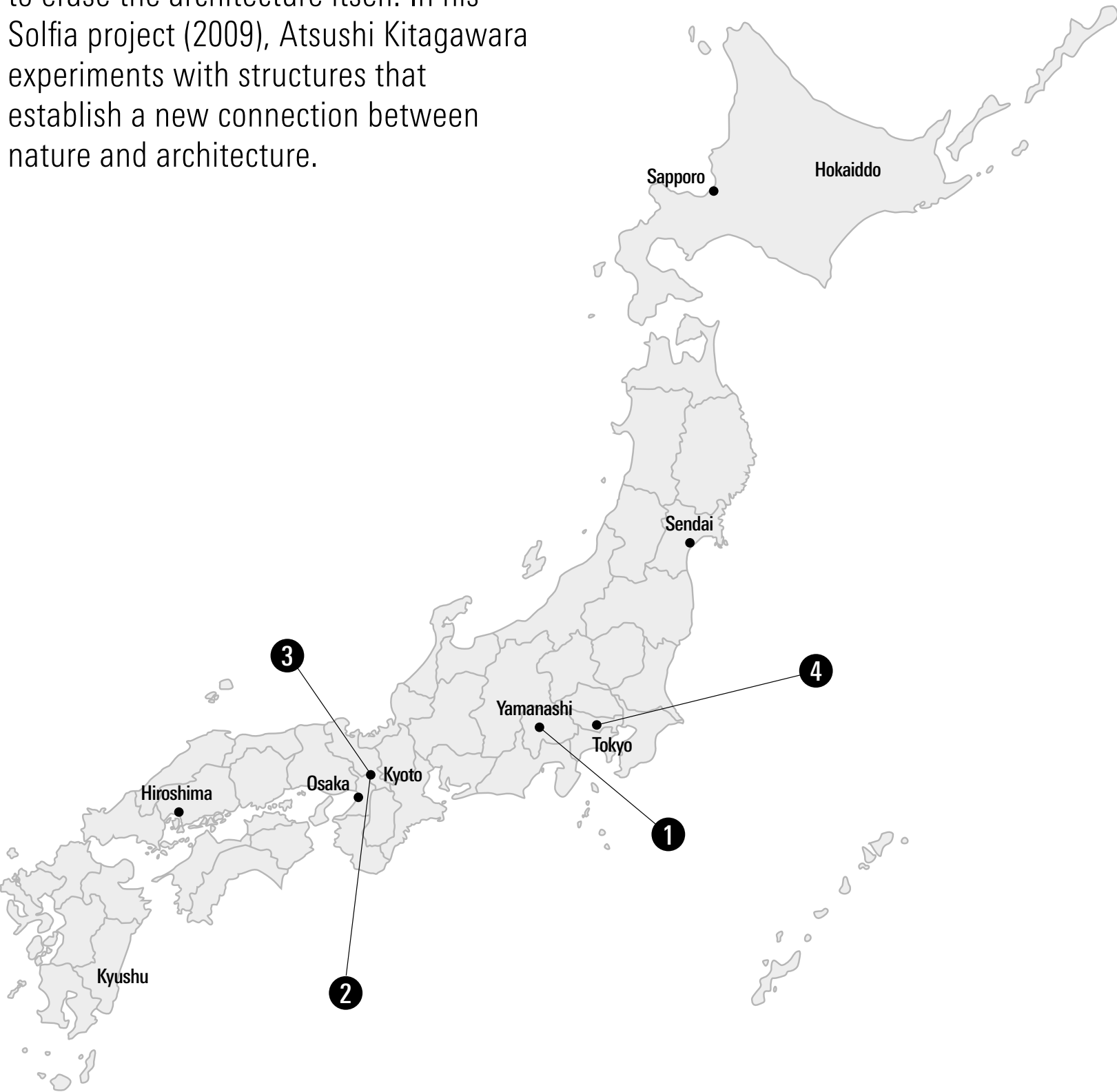
In the early 2000s, Toyo Ito used digital modelling to make a light and transparent architecture that tended toward its own disappearance. This new poetic was developed notably by the SANAA agency: minimalistic geometry, translucent walls, horizontal sites, indoor-outdoor porosity.

Similar typologies appeared with Kengo Kuma and Shigeru Ban, revealing the potential of materials. Terunobu Fujimori created landscaping experiments that use archaic forms and natural materials to erase the architecture itself. In his Solfia project (2009), Atsushi Kitagawara experiments with structures that establish a new connection between nature and architecture.

Marked by the Fukushima catastrophe in 2011, young architects work on developing community spaces in cities and on responding to the social mutations generated by digital technology, as proposed by Yuusuke Karasawa. Sou Fujimoto revivifies the architecture of erasure by combining opposing elements like open and closed, transparency and opacity, nature and artifice.



④ Sou Fujimoto, Tokyo Apartment, 2010, Model
© Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI/Bertrand Prévost/Dist. RMN-GP



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Around the exhibition

Discover all our activities (tours,
workshops, events...) on our
website: [centrepompidou-
malaga.eu](http://centrepompidou-malaga.eu)

Guided tours

The mediation team offers you
guided tours to discover the
works from the exhibition, in an
active and sensitive way

Individuals

Visit in Spanish included in the
price
of the ticket. Inscription on the
same day at the reception.
25 people maximum.
Wednesday at 6 pm

Groups

From a group of 25 people. In
Spanish, English and French,
by prior reservation: [educacion.
centrepompidou@malaga.eu](mailto:educacion.centrepompidou@malaga.eu)

Information

Opening hours

9.30 a.m. to 8.00 p.m., every day
Ticket offices close at 7:30 p.m.
The museum is closed on
Tuesdays (except holidays and
days before holidays), 1 January
and 25 December

Prices

Temporary exhibitions: €4,
concessions: €2.50
Semi-permanent exhibitions: €7,
concessions: €4
Semi-permanent and temporary
exhibitions: €9,
concessions: €5.50

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