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A study on contemporary Japanese architectural design : ephemeral space and fragmented urbanity

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CHAPTER 3.

JAPANESE URBAN ENVIRONMENT: THE HIDDEN ORDER

1. INTRODUCTION

As we saw in Chapter 2, in absence of a coherent system of values, Japanese architecture and the city are fragmented, obeying the emotions of the moments. Each architect can orient himself towards where he sees fit. The relation between architecture and the city is paradoxical. It is both continuous and discontinuous. The process of commercialization and the flow of information or media technology in contemporary Japanese society had their contribution to urban and architectural renewal.

The Japanese city is also perplexing and confusing. It offers a rich variety of concepts, styles and methods. It cannot be placed under one title. So what are the common factors to all these diverse concepts in Japan today, and how does Japanese architecture, in its variety, hold together in fragmented cities?

Perhaps it is best to look at the urban context of Japanese contemporary architecture. This context offers a mixture frame of tradition and up-to-date technologies. And they all emanate from the special enigmatic society of Japan and its activities.

1.1. Purpose

This chapter aims to analyze the actual state of Japanese architecture and its urban environment. In what appears to be a chaotic and fragmented, there has to be some order keeping the city and its inhabitants holding together and to each other. Therefore, it was necessary to go back to the deep roots of Japanese life and culture, which are an intangible heritage, in order to extract some meaning-generating conditions affecting contemporary Japanese design. The reinterpretation of these conditions is discussed through the analysis of some contemporary constructed projects and their urban environment.

1.2. Procedure

The aim is to know what are the common factors of contemporary Japanese architecture in its multiplicity. What does hold it together, in its fragmentation, so that it is still called 'Japanese'? The answer could lie in the urban context and, eventually, the concepts behind it. I tried to focus on the conditions and the design frame inside which Japanese architects are designing, hence giving them this large freedom of thought and maneuver, leading to detachment from their urban environment. Yet, they are still seen and perceived only and mainly as 'Japanese', in their different concepts and methods.

The apparent being incoherent, the answer had to be in what is hidden: the intangible heritage and tradition. It was noticed that contemporary Japanese architecture and its urban environment are defining continuities between the past and the present. These continuities are discussed throughout this chapter. As they offer a frame of thought affecting contemporary

Japanese design, a thorough review of some contemporary strategies will be discussed in the synthesis, as these strategies are interrelated and could not be placed under one title.

2. ANALYSIS: THE JAPANESE CITY

As a main subject of study concerning Japanese cities, Tokyo could be the best example to consider for analysis. It has been the capital city since the Edo era and the center of activities and ideas. Most of the concepts identifying the Japanese city can be assimilated in it. At present, most of the famous Japanese architects who carry their own thoughts and theories have lived and practiced in Tokyo. After discussing them later in the text, it can be seen how they are influenced by this city and, eventually, influence it with their response.

2.1. The Temporal Domain

2.1.a. The Invisible Tradition

There are traditions that are both visible and invisible, the religion, philosophy, aesthetics, lifestyle, customs, psychological environment, emotional sensitivity and a sense of order are all clearly characteristics of the people and their culture, but they remain invisible, an intangible tradition. In contrast, architectural style, works of arts and traditional symbols and forms are given expression in concrete objects such as roof shape, decorative element and traditional performing arts, and these forms are a visible tradition. The Japanese traditions, compared to those of western societies, tend to place more value on the invisible tradition.

The comparison of the Greek Parthenon and the Ise Grand Shrine will help to explain this difference. Let us imagine that, right next to the Pathenon, we build its exact replica made out of bright new marble. People would recognize it as a copy and would certainly not recognize it as having the same value as the original. The Grand Shrine of Ise is a classic masterpiece of Japanese architecture with a history of 1,300 years, but in fact the shrine has been rebuilt at twenty-year intervals. (Fig. 3.1) The old design and the construction know-how are passed on from one master carpenter to the next and twenty years was the interval of this change of generation. The most important reason for this practice was that in Japan the visible object and its form might be destroyed almost every twenty years by earthquakes or repeated natural disasters. Also, it is the life cycle of one generation. The heritage was believed to be transmitted and the tradition preserved as long as the invisible tradition was behind the object. With its aesthetics and sense of order this was passed on spiritually from generation to generation, in contrast to the materialist aesthetics of Western civilization, which sought eternity for its architectural monuments. We can call the Japanese aesthetics spiritual; the special character of this type of cultural transmission has been inherited by Japanese contemporary cities and architecture.[1]

For those foreign visitors who arrive in Tokyo for the first time, it seems an international city not so different from Los Angeles, for example. But those non-Japanese who have lived in Tokyo for many years all believe that it is an extremely Japanese city. Tokyo has been built with modern materials and technology so that it is indeed typical to claim that it is an inheritor

of the Japanese tradition in external appearance. The Japanese are perfectly willing to incorporate new cultural elements, new technology, new forms and the symbols of foreign cultures as long as they are certain that they will be able to preserve their invisible tradition. In many architectural works we have been discussing in this research, the architects have incorporated the Japanese tradition and the philosophy of Japanese culture, but this has not always been evident as visible form but has often been hidden behind the latest technology and most advanced material.

One frequently used technique in Japanese cuisine is what is called the hidden flavor, taking care not to call attention to the precise ingredient used, a sophisticated tip is given to a dish with a sweetener condiment or *sake*. The invisible Japanese tradition is like this hidden flavor. In the Japanese city, the hidden flavor is hard to discover.

This hidden flavor can also be mentioned in relation to Japanese architecture. As it was said above, at first sight, at least for a foreigner, it seems that the Japanese city and thus architecture have lost their link with Japanese traditions. This is due to our preset image of continuity, which is perceived through lasting constructions that visually keep reminding us of our past. But in Japan the recollection of the past is not through visible and lasting buildings, but rather through the collective memory of the people and through their strong social structure, or the hidden flavor. So this implies that architecture does not have to respond to any preset constraints or visual orders in order to link people with their past. Their invisible tradition goes beyond the lasting image of architecture, and designing architecture gets liberated from any imposed ties.

2.1.b. Cycle of Life

Tokyo is an ancient city in which it is extremely difficult to find a building more than 40 years old. One reason is the short life cycle of Japanese urban buildings, constructed traditionally of untreated wood. The other reason is the disasters (earthquakes, floods, and fires) which have hit the city many times bringing it to the ground. No big city on earth has been hit so hard in such a variety of ways and each time recovering in such willpower. Tokyo has been living with the threat of extinction ever since it was founded. It is the condition of the city's existence. The combination of great wealth, the newness of the city's fabric and the near certainty of its destruction give the life and culture of the city a sharp emotionalism. Disasters precipitate drastic change. Trends that would normally take decades to mature are realized overnight. And the absence of older buildings, which means the absence of context in which a building has to fit, allows the significance of new buildings to receive the most imaginable expression in their design.

Repeated past experiences justify this constant fear and readiness for renewal after disaster. From this fact, one can start to understand the notion of temporality of the urban life in the mind of the Japanese people. The city is ever changing and it presents nothing but a temporal frame to their activities and life.

Most Japanese cities were destroyed in World War II. When western cities were destroyed, bricks and stone remained as proof of their past existence. But since Japanese cities were largely built of wood they nearly always seem to have disappeared completely. Historically speaking Japanese cities have been beset almost yearly with natural disasters such as earthquakes, typhoons, floods and volcanic eruptions. Edo, which now means Tokyo, was

almost entirely destroyed on several occasions during the battle of the warring state period of the 15th and 16th centuries. In the great earthquake of 1923 a large portion of Tokyo was reduced to ashes. This continual and repeated destruction of buildings and cities has produced in the Japanese uncertainty about existence, a lack of faith in the visible, and a suspicion of the eternal. Arata Isozaki drew the Tsukuba Center in ruins when designed the project. Even before the building was even built, he imagined it in ruins [2] showing the cycle of construction, destruction and reconstruction in his mind. (Fig. 3.2)

On another level of alternation, the four seasons are extremely clearly marked in Japan and the changes throughout the year are dramatic. Seasonal differences are an important aspect of Japanese culture, indispensable in the art of *haiku* for example (a Japanese type of poems) and one of the special features of Japanese cuisine in the use of first catch or harvest of the seasons, is known as *shun-no-mono*. When they eat *shun-no-mono*, people sense the passing seasons and are moved. The idea that buildings and cities should appear as natural as possible and that they should be harmonized with the rest of nature helps to create the tradition of accepting and incorporating the changing seasons into the human lifestyle. The tradition of making buildings and cities provisional structures evolved from this heritage. This temporality is integrated into the root concept of the Buddhist philosophy of the doctrine of impermanence. The Buddhist concept of impermanence teaches us that the whole of what we can see is nothing more than the succession of knowledge. When Tokyo was destroyed only fifty years had passed since building had begun. The first buildings of those fifty years with their continuous growth and change have made Tokyo into a city well suited to temporality.

This temporality is not physical, meaning something that is short-lived and easily amended or added to, but something that is off-center, an architecture that purposefully rejects consistency. All of these represent temporality in a large sense. Life is defined as the process of continuous growth, both dynamic and stable. The importance of the idea of temporality was also a reason that some architects chose the biological term 'Metabolism' as the name of their movement in the 1960s.

In architecture, changes have reached great proportion leading to dramatic transformations. Today, many new projects are built by demolishing existing buildings that had been completed just a few decades, or even a few years, ago. Examples of razed buildings include Kenzo Tange's Tokyo City Hall, built in 1957, (Fig. 3.3) which was a famous representative of Japan's post-war architecture. Upon completion of Tange's new City Hall in Shinjuku, (Fig. 3.4) the previous one is replaced by Raphael Vinoly's Tokyo International Forum.[3] Another famous example is Masaharu Takasaki's Crystal Light Building. Built in 1987, it was torn down in 1990 without ever being used at all. (Fig. 3.5) It was replaced by a more profitable structure. In this context, Toyo Ito once commented that many architects expect their projects to last only a few years. Ito's own Nomad Restaurant in Tokyo's Roppongi area had been commissioned for only a couple of years' use; designed within two weeks in 1986, it has been replaced with something else.[4] (Fig. 3.6) We can clearly see how the ever-changing city, due to fear of destruction and the natural feeling for temporality, is affecting architecture. The latter has become like seasonal foliage fading away and the next foliage is waiting for its turn in the following season.

2.1.c. Meeting the Future

In "The Fractal geometry of Nature", Benoit B. Mandelbrot says "There are various ways of evaluating length... coastline length turns out to be an elusive notion that slips between the fingers of one who wants to grasp it. All measurement methods lead to the conclusion that the typical coastline's length is very large and so ill-determined that it is best determined infinite." The shape of a coastline changes constantly with shifting tides. If the coast were composed of vertical, rocky cliffs, the tides would not greatly alter the configuration of the coastline, but a shore of sandy beaches will be reshaped by the tides with each advancing hour. A coastline, therefore, is not a clear-cut outline. We are forced to acknowledge that the existence of an intermediary territory incessantly changes, both physically and conceptually, causing intrusions into both inner and outer space in accordance with such phenomena as the rising and falling of the tides.

Western thought, beginning with the Greek philosophers, is traditionally reluctant to deal with this intermediate territory. Other traditions, on the other hand, attach considerable importance to this realm, as does Japan's, with its affinity for ambiguity and incompleteness. The differing views regarding the definition of an outline are important when considering form in architecture, the aesthetics of the townscape and the appearance of cities.

Close Observation of urban environments in Japan reveals that there is some wisdom in allowing for such undefined outlines. If an outline must be clearly delineated, it is necessary to impose restraints on the function of architecture or on the lifestyles within the area. Building codes are established, and town planning or zoning ordinance is enacted. It becomes necessary to place constraints on individual freedoms. Building and urban planning policy in Japan is considerably looser and more ambiguous than that in European countries, and this is the result of the strong resistance Japanese have to giving up freedom of movement for the sake of regularity of forms or clarity of outlines.

Japanese architecture gives priority to content. Content evolves in response to societal change, but form, once determined, is pretty hard to alter. The practice of setting standards for the height or configuration of buildings, as often-observed in European cities, was never very popular in Japan. On the contrary, there was complete freedom regarding the shape or location of windows and other features closely related to building outline, as well as for the materials of color of the walls. This lack of unity is, in addition, made to seem more chaotic by the inclusion of projecting signboards, rooftop advertising towers, hanging banners and electric poles, amid various trees and shrubs, gates, and concrete walls. Bedding is draped over balcony railings and washing is hung under eaves, creating even further convolutions in the outlines of architecture.

Where the outline is clear, a distinct form emerges that possesses a certain artistic quality. Where the outline is unclear, form is random or amorphous, like a spontaneous organism or the branching of a tree. If there is a hidden order in such amorphous shape, then it cannot be said to be complete chaos, and architecture and cities characterized by it have a potential not sufficiently appreciated until now.

Tokyo is the perfect example of the fluid, regenerating city. It was leveled by fire many times during the Edo period, and a major part was burned to the ground in the Great Kanto Earthquake and Fire of 1923. Even after the devastating bombings of World War II, it did not become an abandoned ruin; it survived and revived with even greater vigor. Many of Europe's metropolises are plagued by the so-called doughnut phenomenon, or depopulation of

the city core, but the heart of Tokyo – and most of Japan's cities – remains vital. This is the result of a healthy metabolism, making the city the scene of constant renewal and change. The cores of Western cities, with their indestructible masonry structures, on the other hand, suffer from stagnation and rigidity.

Today, rapid changes in society are calling for new functions for cities and some modification of the nature of architecture. Faced with a building whose exterior tile is flaking off, whose metallic curtain walls have corroded, whose elevators and air-conditioners no longer work well, or which does not have strong enough floors, high enough ceilings, or powerful enough electrical wiring to accommodate the introduction of high-tech communications and computer equipment, the Japanese would tend to decide that it is wisest to construct a new, more efficient building. Japanese are accustomed to thinking of architecture as temporary; the notion of this earthly world as being as but a transient abode has a long tradition going back to early modern times. In fact, the changeless monuments of masonry of the West, preserved and lived in for literally centuries, are somewhat curious monuments of the past.

At present, the owner of a piece of land in Japan is free to divide up his property anyway he or she likes. This is true for Tokyo as elsewhere in Japan. Since plots are of peculiar shape and size, the structures are often oddly designed. One gets pencil-like buildings with space for little but stairways or elevators. Building sites are often so irregular that it is difficult to arrange structure in an orderly fashion, resulting in a townscape that is like a set of badly aligned teeth. It is inevitable that a city built with this kind of short-range vision should appear disorderly and confusing.

The coming 21st century will be an era of sophisticated technology. It will be necessary to lay optical fiber and lines for the information network system beneath the streets in our cities and to channel them to every part of our buildings. Will a city like, for example, Paris, where fundamental architectural change is impossible, be able to adapt? Perhaps we will all be compelled to re-evaluate the merits of the changeful character of Japanese cities.

It is certainly true that Tokyo is chaotic and lacking in artistic coordination as well as clear identity. Nevertheless, a tremendous urban population has managed to live in relative harmony, and has been responsible for achievements in economic development that have astonished the world. Cities in the West may give more priority to form than does Tokyo, but with its concern for content Tokyo thrives according to an order hidden within chaos. If there was no such order, how could the citizens of the world's second largest city lead the lives they do in such reasonable comfort?

Japanese architecture has always given more priority to the invisible than to the visible. Thus allowing the visible to be free in having expressions often incoherent with each other. Looking deeper into the freedom that allows this preference of the invisible we uncover, as we saw in 2.1.a., that the invisible tradition lies in the people's culture, memory and activities. And architecture, in what seems to be chaotic, is waiting to be substituted.

2.2. The Moving Realm

2.2.a. The *Sugoroku* City [5]

At first glance, the Japanese city, especially Tokyo, offers little sense of order. It has no symbolic center, as a Western city would, and no geometric framework for its spatial hierarchy. It is an agglomeration of many villages. (Fig. 3.7)

For this reason Tokyo has often been called a 'mosaic city' and a 'collage city'. And this has affected a lot its architecture. The buildings themselves are a mosaic of styles and concepts, and each one is shouting loudly on its own. The absence of one center, thus one local idea, gives way to what seems to be chaotic but, in fact, ordered in people's minds. Fragmentation, deconstruction, multiplicity, etc. seem in this context a normal outcome, not a strange phenomenon.

No matter how much the parts of Tokyo are emphasized, they do not add up to one whole. It brings to mind the game of *Meisho Sugoroku* [6] in which each spot on the board represented a famous place in the city to be visited with a roll of the dice. This game graphically demonstrates the view of the city of Edo as a chain of distinct places with its own distinct image. (Fig. 3.8) In this perspective, the city of Edo, or Tokyo, is itself a game of *Sugoroku*. Each area is strongly identified with some distinctive characteristic, which yet does not diminish the feeling of subordination to a whole. The city itself is formed by a network that connects these places, which the citizens hold in common. Therefore, this "*Sugoroku* City" maintains its tradition by allowing a total freedom in architectural design and keeping it subordinate to the whole. Although the 'placeless' architecture is being designed, it is still subordinate to the "*Sugoroku* City"; a concept carried on since the Edo era. We can see how tradition offers a moving frame, which goes on so far, within which a freedom of mind and spirit is allowed, extending to architecture.

The *sugoroku* game shows the means of understanding the city in the Japanese mind. The city is not centered on a famous landmark; it is the linkage of points constructed in people's mind. Nothing is fixed; everything changes and moves. The concept of the city is very much associated with movement. Although the city is being built and rebuilt, it is the memory of the people that keeps moving in the city's history through the temporal construction. The city itself becomes a temporal frame for all kinds of manifestations.

It is the character of Tokyo and Japanese culture which is separate from, for example, the typical craftsman's attempt to express his individuality and expertise in the execution of the details. His process of working, not from the whole to the part but from the parts to the whole, is part of the uniquely Japanese aesthetics that place such barriers on details. Japanese art and architecture and Japanese cities do not reveal their distinctions or their strengths when they are viewed as totally but as you approach them gradually and investigate the details a whole new world opens before your eyes.

While Western architecture in cities is organized in an exemplary hierarchy from infrastructure down to the part and detail, there is a stronger feeling of autonomy of parts in Japanese cities. In previous writings that analyze Tokyo, Kisho Kurokawa has expressed the idea that Tokyo is a conglomeration of 300 cities.[7] In fact Tokyo in the Edo period was forced by the ruler of Tokugawa to take up residence in the new capital, Edo. Each Lord was assigned an area and in addition to his ample revenue. Temples and shrines and monks from

the region gathered in the area and took up residence, forming a city within a city. Tokyo used to be a group of small cities and this tradition has been inherited by contemporary Tokyo in a symbiosis of parts and whole.

The new Japanese style hierarchy is evident in this new hierarchy; no city-center or plaza, no boulevards or landmarks are necessary and there seems to be no order except for the energy, freedom and multiplicity that comes from the parts that are there. The creation of this new hierarchy is a process which makes use of spontaneous occurring forces, and for that reason it is probably more accurate to say that Tokyo today, where private investment plays too strong a role, finds itself somewhere between chaos and order.

In architecture, this decentralization and absence of a center or unique landmark sets new values. These values move towards the ephemeral. People's memory becomes more important to satisfy than the locale, or the physical space, itself being defined by people's activities rather than their visual order. Again, architecture responds to this further and goes on in fragmenting the city landscape and detaching itself from any visual and central order. It floats over the city and denies it any imposed restraints, thus becoming again a free-spirit architecture. A spirit because the physical body and material are ever changing in an ever-moving city, as in the *Meisho Sugoroku* game.

2.2.b. The New Primitivism

The Japanese city, represented best in Tokyo, displays unique characteristics which, inherited from the past, contribute to these developments. Chaotic conditions, congestion, heterogeneity, the variety of signs, along with the lack of any sensible center or regulating order are by now well-known features of Japanese urbanism. Nevertheless, there is another important aspect that articulates urban life in Japan.

Japanese homes are not only cramped together but are also extremely small and can hardly be used for much more than a place to retire for the night. As such, they are usually not places for entertaining guests or meeting others. These activities have to take place outside the home, in the city: on the streets or other public places like the smaller or larger pubs, bars, cafés, tea parlors, clubs, shopping arcades, etc. not to mention one's own office that most employees regard as their larger home or family. Moreover, people often commute several hours daily between their homes and places of work. Consequently, Japanese cities and the urban life within have acquired apparently paradoxical dimensions and can be interpreted in two different ways.

a. First, the urban realm now functions as a kind of large common living room of the citizens, where the city appears to have no exterior.
b. Second, this city being always on the move, restless, has minimized the traditional notions of permanent residence and home whereby it can be considered, according to Toyo Ito, as a continuously temporary "camp of urban nomads".

In fact, Toyo Ito designed his own house in Tokyo as a Silver Hut. It is a "primitive hut", but now conceived in the modern urban environment of Tokyo. Instead of wood and logs, it is built of lightweight, easily available and cheap metallic materials of today. Ito observes the fast changing urban realm as a point of convergence where the life of people is in flux and

where the physical, spatial and formal permanence of the environment tends to lose its meaning.

Ito understands contemporary city life as something drawing near the lifestyles of 'nomads', His Nomad pub was designed in two weeks as a temporary structure in 1986, and has already been demolished.

In his recent architecture Ito foresees a potential future wherein the Japanese city is a series of high-tech camps of urban nomads. Nomadic space or architecture can be traversed easily. Comprised of thin metallic frames, aluminum screens and other ferrous plates, plus tent structures, the Silver Hut is penetrated and animated by natural elements such as light and wind, and is shaped by them. It is an architecture of wind.

A few other interpretations than Toyo Ito reveal this affinity to move architecture towards a nomadic space and the new primitivism, wherein space is in continuous alteration: Kazuyo Sejima, in Platform #1 and #2. Fluid and scattered spaces are evoked by performance. Sejima's works suggest an architecture as site which is generated by actions. Her 'nomadic architecture' is formed by thin roofs, like tents floating over empty spaces, inducing light and shadows. While Riken Yamamoto's Hamlet, a residential building for an extended family in Tokyo, uses Teflon fiber fabric to define an ambiguous domain of habitat in the surrounding city. Minoru Takeyama's Tokyo Port Terminal is open to nature: wind, sunshine, and also to both the sea and the city. Thus defining an architecture that goes with the wind, sunshine, the sea and the city. The Urban Nomads and the new primitivism take over.

2.3. The Urban Theater

2.3.a. A Post-Modern Tradition

The cosmopolitan power of games overflows the actual powers. The 'bourgeois' culture of the Edo period, born in the pleasure quarters, deviated from the general order. From which we have the expression: "It is the theatre that comes first, the world is only imitating it" [8]. The whole system of social distinction was reoriented. To recognize the power of game and imagination characterizes the culture of that period. And it can be said that it was post-modern before the letter. It is astonishing that contemporary Japan discovered Post-Modernism and rediscovered Edo, under the angle of urbanization marked with games and theatrical attitude in architecture.

Post-Modernism appears as liberation from the modernist reason. But this is actually a Western point of view. In Japan, the games and atmosphere of Post-Modern design have been there for a long period of time. The special lit atmosphere of Tokyo, its chaotic action, is peculiar. This spatial animation is not new. While the streets of Yamanote district were quiet, the streets in Nihonbashi and other places where commoners gathered were given life by a vast array of signboards, *noren* shop curtains and banners. (Fig. 3.9)

The actual age of Post-Modernity in Japan appears as a line going towards the moving and the undecided. In this sense, Post-Modernity in Japan is not just an architectural movement, but a trans-historic aesthetic category [9]. In the sense that it is not related to a

sequence of time and style, but rather to a world view. If we accept this interpretation, we can recognize a Post-Modern atmosphere in different phases of Japanese architecture. We could go back to Edo to evoke the same atmosphere. It is noticed how the urban theater of Tokyo is carried on since the Edo era, leading to the architecture of signs. This leads us to say that the apparent incoherence of the forms of the city, in fact, nourishes the cohesion of the Japanese city.

Architecture responds to the collage-like heterogeneous Japanese city. This made it acquire a certain sign quality, freely manipulated. The Post-Modern embedded tradition allows that freely. We find traces of scenography enhanced by sophisticated technology. We could imagine Tokyo as a big stage on which architecture is playing its role. Architects integrate in the act, participate energetically, but knowing that the act will be renewed one day. It will not last forever. The feeling of temporality is overcastting.

2.3.b. Images and Information

Tokyo was already a very densely populated city in the Edo period with a population density 890 people per hectare. The streets were always filled with people and all sorts of business were constantly being conducted on the street. In the 19th century the population climbed to over one million making it the most populated city on earth. Much of Japan is mountainous and almost all level ground holds cities. Several cities around the world have high population densities, like Hong Kong, Shanghai and Mexico City, but the Japanese cities of Tokyo and Osaka have an extremely high population density per house. Public transportation in Japan is the most crowded in the world, so much so that there are special pushers whose job it is to cram people from the platform into the carriages of the rush hour trains. The population density of the offices is also very high, and since most offices are laid out as large rooms without divisions, the crowding is only emphasized.

This physical density is reflected in business, regional society, groups and families as a strong feeling of belonging or group awareness. Japan's groupism creates a collective oriented lifestyle in both business and local regions of the country. The family system within professions and the group awareness in each occupation is very strong.

One other remarkable feature of contemporary Japan is the density of information. Everyday, information and events from every corner of the world appear on Japanese television, in newspapers, magazines and specialist journals. Although mostly about the USA and Europe, a remarkable amount of information concerning Africa, Central and South America, Asia, Russia and Eastern Europe reaches the general public on a daily basis. Such information from other countries and cultures on a popular level is unknown in Europe or America. It is unique to Japan. The astonishing development and widespread availability among the masses of the latest communication and technology, including all the audio and visual devices, cameras and the world's latest telephones, smallest portable computers, word processors and faxes has made Japan a nation with the highest concentration of information in the world.

Tokyo could be called the invisible world capital, the silent center. The fantastic inflow of information from the rest of the world into Tokyo means that every place on the globe feels very close, within reach. The outflow, however, is quite weak, with results that from outside

Tokyo can still feel remote. And this inflow of information, style and techniques is taken for granted in Japanese cities as an integral part of the culture, thus creating a huge variety of styles. The urban theater of Tokyo appears to be nothing but signs. It is an architecture that "floats on the sea of signs", as Hajime Yatsuka calls it. Some architecture, like the Japanese city itself, is also superficial. It is a delirious urban theater, a stage set. (Fig. 3.10)

From huge urban centers to farms in the countryside, from universities to industrial research centers to local shops and homes, these highly advanced devices have spread throughout the nation. Every year the capacity increases, their prices drop and their size shrinks. What makes this speedy development possible is the Japanese love and curiosity for the new, which makes the consumers willing to keep exchanging their possession for the latest product to hit the market.

This wave of internationalization, increasing density and growing information has created stiff competition for Japanese architects. The condition of the dense and highly developed society forces the Japanese architects to practice and study continuously in their society. The slightest difference is taken seriously, encouraging the architects to create works that distinguish them from their competitors. And the amount of inflow of information makes people ready to accept and ideas that seem to be smoothly assimilated into architectural design.

For Japanese people visual tradition is nothing. If they can keep their lifestyle fitted to the traditional way then they can easily import and plant into different cultures. It is this that makes Tokyo quite difficult to understand for outsiders, but for Japanese people Tokyo is very easy to read, very safe and very dynamic.

There are reasons why people grow very fond of this city:[10]

First, every type of architectural development is crammed in without any concern for the impression which the whole picture makes. It is just a complete random conglomeration of economically viable elements.

Second, the most glamorous face of modern Tokyo, which is only apparent by night, has a lot to do with the fantastic quality and importance of Japanese neon signs. Roland Barthes made a great deal of this, quite rightly, that in a way the signs are more significant than the buildings. At nighttime the buildings disappear and the signs are left hanging in the air, and you suddenly have an unfamiliar image of urban glamour which is quite persuasive and quite novel.

The fact is that architects have an enormous amount of freedom to build what they want. It is surely very enviable from the point of view of architects working here and yet because the chaos is so vast and so unrelieved the effect of any architectural design is very limited by this. An example of this is that a lot of foreign architects have built in Tokyo over the last 20 years. But of those who have built here, the one who has had the most impact and the most popular success has been Philippe Starck. While he is not an architect, he was building really quite cynically to shock and to astound, and what he did was to shout out loud to be noticed in the architectural chaotic jungle of Tokyo.

In the fiercely competitive environment, profitability demands the continued attention and attraction of both the public and the media, therefore newness and imaging are often primary criteria in commissioning new edifices. Hence architecture and urbanism tend towards the quality of changeable signs and advertising, whose strategy of fascination is to

exploit human desires. The ultimate purpose is to turn people into consumers who are irresistibly attracted to commodities.

Architecture's respond to these dominating conditions of the city: acceptance. The traditional predisposition of the Japanese towards a 'floating world', as well as the penetration of the most advanced information and media technologies into contemporary life, recent society in Japan has produced cities in the fast lane. More than merely an ephemeral realm, this is radically a volatile world, wherein a sense of reality is profoundly undermined by forces of simulation or wherein reality is rendered as a fiction. It may be said that we have reached a stage of architecture and urbanism wherein the essence of the built environment is produced as images and information. That is to say the city is rendered largely as media and architecture is the mean to promote that media through signs and simulation.

2.3.c. Technology and Fiction

Today's design intentions increasingly rely on new technologies that include the latest in construction, computer and media technologies. The range of examples wherein a new approach to technology is particularly evident includes the works of Shinohara, Isozaki, Maki, Hara, Hasegawa, Ito, Sejima, Sakamoto, Yatsuka, Kitagawara and Takamatsu. These architects and others reinterpret technology in their own individual ways and also according to the character of the task at hand.

The range of new technologies behind today's developments in architecture and culture is more related to a software technology that operates like a computer program. With no claim to universality and rigid rationality, this technology is more intuitive, flexible and more locally oriented. Here, in contrast to Modernism's rational systemization, standardization, mass production, with industrial technology which was universal. The new technology in architecture aims to stimulate the human senses and to appeal to human emotions and desires, thus becoming sensual.

The potentials and impact of the new software technologies are far-reaching in architecture. And it is evident that in Japan these potentials are being thoroughly explored both in their positive and negative implications. Such implications would be theatricality and spectacular manifestation.

The effect of new technologies is apparent in the articulation of details. This represents a high quality craftsmanship. The precision in which some buildings are put together seem to defy construction limitations. This attitude surpasses the artistry of traditional craftsmanship. The excessive details in Takamatsu's buildings for example: Metallic parts, steel plates, polished surfaces, etc. are technological in nature. Such details can only render technology as merely an image.

Lightness, permeability, fluidity of space, a feeling for temporality and an 'immaterial evocation of building'. This is related to a new interpretation and application of technology, different from the idealized one, upon which Modernism was built. The reliance on new technologies has begun to disclose a new technological landscape:

1. A new industrial vernacular as in Itsuko Hasegawa's house in Oyamadai

2. A difficult, highly elaborated and personal styles and monuments in search of meaning as in Shin Takamatsu's many projects.

3. Acknowledging the urban theater or the city as fiction:

The new urban technology is an architectural software technology that ranges between simplicity and highly sophisticated craftsmanship, with a strong appeal to sensuality. The technology with its vagueness is derived from the existing urban conditions that emanate from the Japanese feel for reality and fiction.

" The day when there was an immutable style... are past... The classical urban order having collapsed, any work of architecture that, in a sense, internalizes the city and functions on its exterior surface as a mechanism of information transmission will ... symbolize today's image of the city - an environment that is fragmented but that constantly renews its vitality precisely through its state of fragmentation." Fumihiko Maki, 'Spiral'.

The new architectural technology produces a non-structural, non-hierarchical landscape. It results in an architecture of independent parts in a fragmented landscape.

Many recent Japanese works do not intend to forward any formal statement. Yet they intend to break the unity of form and fragment it:

Kazuo Shinohara's house in Yokohama is an agglomeration of parts, like in a 'zero degree machine', as he calls it. His inspiration comes from the latest technological advancements, which display extremely complex forms, yet they are lacking any formal synthesis. The various forms and volumes of the house are joined abruptly. This way of assembling achieved a certain fragmentation.

Fragmentation however does not mean that there are no structural considerations in shaping the new architecture and technological landscape.

Shinohara's TIT Centennial Hall is inspired from the chaotic energy of its urban surrounding. Trying to deny it, he builds over it.

Fumihiko Maki, in Spiral, Tokyo, responds to the collage-like heterogeneous city by articulating his buildings with sequentially layered spaces. Similar to traditional architecture, these layered spaces involve the intricate arrangement of surfaces, as in Tepia Science Pavilion, Tokyo, and the use of various screens, thus inducing a certain depth. Building envelopes of Maki's works, freely manipulated, have become detached from the main body, acquiring a certain sign quality. We could see traces of scenography.

Hajime Yatsuka's Tarlazzi Building is a collection of fragments in architecture. It is an architecture that floats 'on the sea of signs', resonating with the urban theater of Tokyo which appears as nothing but signs.

Shin Takamatsu's technology is hardly more than a sign of itself, technology rendered as ornament. In Kirin Plaza in Osaka, technology is a computer-controlled system of electric signs. Like the Japanese city, it is superficial. It is an urban theater, a stage set.

For many Japanese architects, reality and fiction appear to be the same thing. This is not new. The qualities of the 'floating world' prevailed in Japanese life and architecture in the past. The Japanese have always preferred to perceive things as events rather than substance. This is an aspect of Japanese architecture and urbanism, which is defenseless while confronting the exploitation of the marketplace.

2.4. The Urban Forest [11]

The interpretation of nature as a phenomenon has always been a characteristic of the Japanese mind. It is perceived from the Shinto sacred interpretation of natural phenomena to the Zen philosophy and its miniature gardens representing the cosmos.

In the Katsura and the Shugakuin detached palaces in Kyoto, the buildings would not be complete without the surrounding gardens. By contrast, Le Corbusier's architecture is self-centered, requiring huge spaces, as in Chandigarh, so that it can be seen uninterrupted from a distance. The first thing one notices about the traditional buildings of Japan is their relative diminutive proportions, asymmetry, and modest facades, often deliberately hidden in the surrounding shrubbery. Upon close inspection, one sees that great attention has been given to the grain of the wood, its carefully smoothed texture, and the precision of its joints and interlocking timbers. Each such feature demonstrates a beauty in irregularity that originates from a hidden viewpoint; together they stand in sharp contrast to the beauty of proportions meant to be seen from a distance.

One discovers the real beauty of Japanese architecture not in bright sunlight, but in dim candlelight or in the mellow illumination of a paper covered lantern, and not from afar, but by drawing close to it and savoring the fragrance and the feel of wood and *tatami*. Even in our present society, these are the qualities that Japanese treasure most.

The Japanese aesthetic draws its inspiration from the subtle changes of the four seasons. The climate is characterized by considerable rainfall, and the wet and damp is everywhere. Mist and moisture soften the difference between things and people, and blurring shapes. The heavy humidity in summer nourishes the lush growth of vegetation, which could envelop a low, traditional-style dwelling, hiding its outlines. In the midst of this environment, any attempt at grand symmetry or exterior symbolism is doomed. The aesthetic of Japan's climate thus came to be characterized by ambiguity and irregularity.

Lately, some reinterpretations of nature could be recognized. Many contemporary Japanese architects have a continuous search for theories that allow them to use nature as a symbol in their design. The symbol goes beyond the form or mere presence. It is a concept by itself, a concept of life and the interpretation of present-day city. It is a live phenomenon. We can distinguish this on two levels: the buildings and the city.

On the building design level, there is a new interpretation and application of technology, different from the idealized one, upon which modernism was built.

In Japan today there is a direction in which association with nature is predominant. This alternative mode design relies on lightweight structures and thin, semi-permeable, ferrous and other materials to evoke flexible, scattered and ambiguous spaces; comparable to those experienced in nature. This way intends to redefine "architecture as another nature" [12]. The buildings become "poetic machines or futuristic, man-made constructs" [13].

As for the city, it is used as topography of landscape. Riken Yamamoto calls the "city as topography". The existing city is regarded as layered substructure, like a metaphorical archaeological site, and architects build out of it, as well as over it. We have now a reinterpretation of the city landscape, which is not only a physical one anymore, but one that also contains images from the past and metaphors of nature.

Now we have a new generation of architects like Toyo Ito and Itsuko Hasegawa who were born in Tokyo and have spent their whole life there. For them the artificial things like technology or concrete are nature. Actually the massive concrete city looks like a new mountain or river, and that is why the new tendency of the younger generation is easily making a high-tech architecture as second nature or their own nature.

What emerge are the reconsidered and new roles of nature and the outside world, and the reinterpretation of nature in relation to the city. That is, understanding the city as topography. Understanding the city as topography sees the possibilities of an architectural and urban renewal over and above the existing urban landscape:

1. The first direction regards the existing city as a layered substratum, like a metaphorical archeological site, and builds out of it as well as over it.

Numerous architects began to interpret the existing fabric of the 'city as topography' and build over or above this reality. Much of this architecture acts as an artificial land on which urban activity continues while the independent new facilities above are free. Such simulated domains with architecture on them mean structures that are designed with rooftop terraces, plazas, walkways, stairs, parks and other scenery that form the complex:

Minoru Takeyama designed the Tokyo Port terminal as an artificial hill with a house-like structure on it.

Riken Yamamoto calls the 'city as topography.' Rotunda is designed to comply with the characterless suburban setting of Yokohama. Also to sustain a new kind of architecture over the lower base section, with the owner's residence under the Teflon fiber tent structure.

In Itsuko Hasegawa's house in Nerima, the open spaces are activated by the penetration of nature. She also intends to "redefine architecture as another nature". She shapes her works as complex assemblages similar to nature. And her Shonandai Cultural Center seeks to evoke images of rolling hills, trees and woods.

Hiroshi Hara: the Iida City Museum occupies the site of the previous feudal castle. Hara's new urban fabric, abundant with wide stairways, rooftop public promenades and various scattered gazebo-like structures, is both futuristic and archaic. It is a 'paradoxical high-tech ruin.' Hiroshi Hara's new 'architecture of modality' aims to make the boundaries between nature, architecture and the city as ambiguous as possible. Undulating forms, designed with highly polished aluminum plates, remind us of clouds, mist and foliage.

Both Hasegawa and Hara's methods imply the process of 'naturalizing architecture', wherein architectural forms stand as replacement of nature. The 'architecture as another nature' runs the risk of turning architecture into a simulacrum of nature.

Fumihiko Maki refers to a ruinous acropolis when imaging the uppermost part of his Spiral building.

Kazuo Shinohara's TIT Centennial Hall concludes this line of urban topography, conceived as an imaginary future city over the old and ruinous one below.

Tadao Ando has set the phenomena of nature against the contemporary superficial mass culture and the megalopolis. In his Sumiyoshi Row House in Osaka he recollected the notion of an 'urban space', complete with an open-air stairway and bridge in-between the two sections of the residence.

Yet as he does in some of his recent projects, such as Collezione in Tokyo, the space is more open and more fragmented than in earlier private residences, and these new works accept the outside world more willingly than before. He continues to deploy elements of his own imaginary city within the context of urban ephemerality. Yet, by the use of layered walls, focused openings, and sequences of spaces Ando continues to 'architecturalize nature'.

2. The other direction relies on the topography of actual landscaping by embedding architecture in it. We can observe the emergence of a trend that, rather than interpreting architecture as landscape or nature, utilizes the landscape as architecture:

Toyo Ito uses both directions, in Sapporo Beer Guest House, 1989 and Yatsushiro Municipal Museum, Kumamoto. The lower section of the building is covered by an artificial mound, and the upper section floats above the site and the rest of the structure.

Tadao Ando, in his Water Temple, Awaji-shima, large parts of the structures are buried under earth. These buildings create a special relationship between architecture and the reality of the land. The earthwork is neither landscaping nor gardening. It is an active part of the building.

3. SYNTHESIS

In the light of what has been discussed so far, some actual constructed projects and their urban environments will be analyzed. The aim is simply to try to unfold some concepts that are relevant today and that might help us to understand the actual state.

Strategies generated by many architects will be developed in trying to understand the actual state of Japanese architecture. Some of these strategies, or concepts, are mutually exclusive, while some are closely related to others. That is to say, they reveal continuities. As each strategy is not conceived in a 'formula' type, it could not fall under a specific category or in a single chapter. Being interrelated, the examples are discussed separately in the synthesis.

The concepts unfolded and discussed will focus on the new prevailing spirit in the pluralistic contemporary Japanese architecture and the state of the Japanese city. As mentioned before, the new architecture in Japan is affected by temporality, movement, theatrical attitude, technology and association with nature. These concepts offer a setting, a frame of work for the new design that recalls some fundamentals of the Japanese culture. And these are not rigid principles applied to the letter, they present a prevailing spirit in design.

The Japanese city is liberated from any pre-set ideas. We saw previously the constant fear of physical change, the enormous inflow of information through advanced technology and the apparent chaos of signs and forms, the perception of city through movement. Adding to that the reinterpretation of the city as nature. All these give us a feeling of temporality in the context of the city, which offers a joyful playground for architects to fantasize and achieve their dreams:

Itsuko Hasegawa intends to redefine 'architecture as another nature'. She shapes her works as complex assemblages analogous to nature; like in her Shonandai Cultural Center, she seeks to evoke images of rolling hills, trees and woods. In her house in Nerima, the open spaces, especially the belvedere with its moon-viewing platform, are activated by the penetration of nature. (fig. 3.11, 3.12)

Hiroshi Hara's aim, with his 'architecture of modality' [14], is to make the boundaries between nature, architecture and the city as ambiguous as possible. His undulating forms, designed with highly polished aluminum plates, are to remind us of such natural formations as clouds, mist and foliage both outside and inside. Hara's new urban fabric, abundant with wide stairways, rooftop public promenades and various scattered gazebo-like structures, is both futuristic and archaic. It is a high-tech ruin. (Fig. 3.13, 3.14)

In the case of Hasegawa and Hara, they are "naturalizing architecture" [15]. This risks of turning architecture into a simulacrum of nature. What counterbalances this in their works is the extensive application of ordinary industrial materials, which makes them as poetic machines or futuristic, man-made constructs. Nature here is a constant obsession. The city is a metaphor of nature, and the elements of nature themselves are reflected in the materials used.

Fumihiko Maki refers to a ruinous acropolis when imaging the upper part of his Spiral building in Tokyo, in reference to his interpretation of the city as a metaphorical archaeological site. Although it is a solid construction, the ruinous idea gives it a feeling of temporality. In the Municipal Gymnasium in Fujisawa, it seems that Maki did everything to break the continuity and unity of forms. It is evident when this building is compared to another masterpiece 20 years earlier, Tange's Tokyo Olympic Gymnasium. Every new viewpoint reveals a new silhouette, a new image. These images vary between traditional and

futuristic high-tech references. He also responds to the collage-like heterogeneous Japanese city by articulating his buildings with sequentially layered spaces. Similar to traditional architecture, these layered spaces involve the intricate arrangement of surfaces. In Spiral and the Tepia Science Pavilion, the use of various screens and the arrangement of surfaces made the buildings' envelopes detached from the body. This made them acquire a certain sign quality, freely manipulated. We find traces of scenography enhanced by sophisticated technology and active on the urban theater. (Fig. 3.15, 3.16)

Kazuo Shinohara, his house in Yokohama is an accumulation of different parts in a "zero degree machine" as he calls it. He is inspired by the latest technological advancements in modern times, like a rocket or a fighter plane. But his technological forms are empty from any formal synthesis, unlike the pioneers of the Modern movement. The various forms and volumes are joined abruptly, thus achieving a certain fragmentation. Fragmentation, however, does not mean that there are no structural considerations in shaping the new architecture and technological landscape. In his TIT Centennial Hall with its flying tubes, appears to reinterpret Arata Isozaki's previous vision: the 'City in the Air', conceived as an imaginary future city over the old one below. The building is inspired by the chaotic energy of its non-logical urban surrounding. The interpretation of the city as topography gives the possibility of architectural and urban renewal above the existing urban landscape, thus rendering the latter temporal and subject to continuous change. (Fig. 3.17, 3.18, 3.19)

Riken Yamamoto calls the "city as topography". His Rotunda, in Yokohama, sustains a new kind of architecture over the lower base section. The airy and cavernous space, with the owner's residence under the Teflon fiber tent structure, is close to Toyo Ito's own Silver Hut. Also Hamlet, in Tokyo, exemplifies this. He uses again Teflon fiber to define an ambiguous habitat in the surrounding city. The feeling of temporality and a nomadic attitude are obvious. He is complying with the characterless urban setting of the Japanese city. (Fig.3.20)

Minoru Takeyama designed the Tokyo Port Terminal as an artificial hill with a house-like structure on it. He is interpreting the city as an archaeological site. The project is open to nature, wind, sunshine, the sea and the city thus becoming an integral part of them. (Fig. 3.31, 3.32)

Kazuyo Sejima, in Platform #1 and #2, evokes fluid spaces by performance. Sejima's work suggests an architecture as site that is generated by actions, a 'place' denoted by temporal potential capacity rather than a lasting construct. Also, this 'nomadic architecture' is limited to thin, protective roofs, like tents floating above airy spaces, subject to light and shadow. (Fig. 3.23, 3.24)

Tadao Ando, by his interpretation of architecture in relation to nature, set the phenomena of nature against the contemporary mass culture and the megalopolis. In many of his projects, like Collezione in Tokyo and the Literature Museum in Himeji, the spatial design is more open than in his earlier private residences. They filter the outside world more willingly than before. His spatial arrangements introduce nature into architecture and recall the urban space. However, by using layered walls and focused openings, Ando continues to "architectualize nature" [16] rather than the opposite. On the other hand, in his Water Temple in Awaji-shima, large parts of the structures are buried under earth. These buildings create a special relationship between architecture and the reality of the land. The earthwork is neither landscaping nor gardening. It is an active part of the building. (Fig. 3.25, 3.26)

Toyo Ito, in his design, restarted the idea of temporality and association with nature, rethinking the question of the city and seeing it as a metaphor of nature, as a technological nature. Toyo Ito designed his own house in Tokyo as a Silver Hut. It is a 'primitive hut', but

conceived in the modern urban environment (or jungle) of Tokyo. Instead of wood and logs, it is built with lightweight, available and cheap metallic materials of today. The Silver Hut shows the new sensibilities with which Ito reads the city. He sees the fast changing urban domain as a central point where the life of people is in flux and where the physical and spatial permanence of the environment tends to loose its meaning. To him, the Japanese city is a series of high-tech camps of urban nomads. With its metallic frames, aluminum screens and tent structure the Silver Hut is penetrated by natural elements as light and wind and is shaped by them. It is an architecture of wind. It is characterized by lightness, permeability, fluidity of space, a feeling for temporality and an "immaterial evocation of building" [17]. (Fig. 3.27, 3.28)
Ito himself has argued that:
"Architecture is an extremely transient existence like a piece of film wrapping a human body. It does not have a substance nor implies weight. Designing an architecture is an act of generating vortexes in the currents of air, wind, light and sound. It is not constructing a dam against flow nor resigning oneself to the current" [18].
On the other hand, in his Sapporo Beer Guest House as in Yatsushiro Municipal Museum, Kumamoto, the lower section of the building is covered by an artificial mound, and the upper section floats above the site and the rest of the structure. Like Tadao Ando, the earthwork is an active part of the building. (Fig. 29, Fig. 30)

Shin Takamatsu, when he built Syntax, recalled the collective imagination. Resembling a robot, Takamatsu's buildings have no connection whatsoever with the rest of their urban environment. There is the personal inspiration of the architect added to it the images of machines. Takamatsu's game frames schemes familiar to all Japanese children who follow with passion on TV the adventures of robots of comparable aspects. His architecture participates in the stage set of the city. This leads us to say that the apparent incoherence of the forms of the city, in fact, nourishes the cohesion of the Japanese city. Shin Takamatsu's technology is hardly more than a sign of itself, technology rendered as ornament. In Kirin Plaza in Osaka, technology is a computer-controlled system of electric signs. Like the Japanese city, it is superficial. It is an urban theater, a stage set. It is a difficult, highly elaborated and personal style and monuments in search for a meaning. (fig. 3.31, 3.32)

Hajime Yatsuka's Tarlazzi Building is a collection of fragments in architecture. It is an architecture that floats 'on the sea of signs', (Fig. 33) resonating with the urban theater of Tokyo which appears as nothing but signs. (Fig. 3.34)

4. CONCLUSION

Given this dynamism it is quite likely that, as the dialectic continues to develop within Japanese architecture, there will be further interactions and new regrouping. The basic differences between the different architectural currents would lessen as each side borrows from the other. The convergence of Japanese architecture under one umbrella is even possible given the eclectic and inclusive philosophy in Japan.

All the contemporary architectural works, as well as their urban context, carry some common themes: fragmentation, coexistence of opposites, the ephemeral, and the labyrinth. It is the Japanese "Moral Geometry" of proportion, related to emotions, relationships and experience, not a mathematical one. The variety of architectural positions current in Japan leads to confusion which might be questioned. But it also sustains a dynamic culture, which absorbs new ideas and transforms them. Finiteness of classical thoughts is opposed to impermanence and chaos; perfection is traded for creativity; and finally, stability is replaced by change.

The setting and framework that inspires this fragmented pluralistic architecture is due to the many factors discussed earlier. These factors are concepts found in the roots of Japanese culture and it is realized that, by analyzing the present, they are still relevant today. The interaction of these concepts is very strong. It offers a logic, which is both derived from and responds to the existing urban conditions that are founded on the Japanese feel for reality and, especially, fiction.

The Japanese city, as we saw previously, being traditionally a city of change, inflow, chaos, movement and proscenium, offers a framework at liberty of any pre-set values and rigid norms, allowing the pluralistic and free spirit of contemporary design. Nature, imbedded in the ancient philosophies of the country, is repeating itself in a metaphorical way, both on the urban and the building levels. Temporality, starting with the traditional rites, extending to the traditional house and then contemporary design, is being constructed both as a temporal frame (the city) and as an architectural expression (materials).

As we have seen so far, the past carried with it concepts of the future, which is the present now, allowing the acceptance and the evolution of different pluralistic concepts through history. And the present, in its turn, carries references to the past from which the setting and the framework are inspired. This state of mind, in which the new technological landscape is the outcome of what seems to be lying in the past, is a continuous process of going 'back to the future' in Japan. In architecture and its urban environment the link between past, present and future has always been the interpretation of nature and the prevailing feeling for temporality.

In the end of the 20th century, it seems that architects have no choice but to accept the Japanese city as is, as virtual reality. Therefore, the new architecture in Japan is paradoxical as the cultural and built landscape in which it is set. Although Japan's accelerated urban culture has rendered the fate of architecture unpredictable, it has also opened up almost unlimited possibilities. In fact, the demand for innovative experimental designs can be characterized by a sense for both realism and fiction. The broad spectrum of architectural intentions and directions should be considered and evaluated with regards to how Japanese architects understand and are able to respond to the interrelationship between reality and fiction.

5. NOTES

([1]) Kisho Kurokawa, interview, In *Architectural Design*, Jan./Feb. 1994

([2]) Arata Isozaki drew the Tsukuba Center in ruins during the process of designing the project. So before the building was even built, he imagined it in ruins.

([3]) Here, we are talking about monumental buildings being demolished and replaced, costing billions of Yens and time consumption

([4]) In fact, Toyo Ito knew, when he designed the project, that it was going be demolished a few years later. And this is what he expects from architecture now.

([5]) This expression was used by Hidenobu Jinnai, In *Process Architecture*, Jan.1991

([6]) From the Edo period (1603~1868)

([7]) Kisho Kurokawa, Op. Cit.

([8]) Augustin Berque, *Du Geste a La Cite*, Gallimard, Paris, 1993

([9]) Augustin Berque, Ibid.

([10]) Peter Popham, *Tokyo: the city at the end of the world*, Tokyo, New-York, Kodansha International, 1985

([11]) This expression is used by Toyo Ito in describing the actual state of the city. Instead of trees and shrubs, we have now concrete buildings and blocks.

([12]) Botond Bognar, In *Architectural Design*, March/April 1992, pp. 73-96

([13]) Ibid.

([14]) Modality is the logic in which A and Non-A do not exclude each other. One thing could be, for example, simultaneously A at 80% and Non-A at 20%.

([15]) Botond Bognar, Op. Cit.

([16]) Ibid.

([17]) Vladimir Krstic, In *Architectural Design*, Sept./Oct. 1998, pp. 10-15

([18]) Toyo Ito, *Vortex and Current-An Architecture of Phenomalism*

6. GRAPHS AND FIGURES

Fig. 3.1. The twenty-year old precinct of the Inner Shrine of Ise and its newly erected copy. The process of renewal in the interval of a generation.

Fig. 3.2. Tsukuba Center in ruins. Serigraphy by Arata Isozaki showing the constant fear of destruction and alteration even during the design phase.

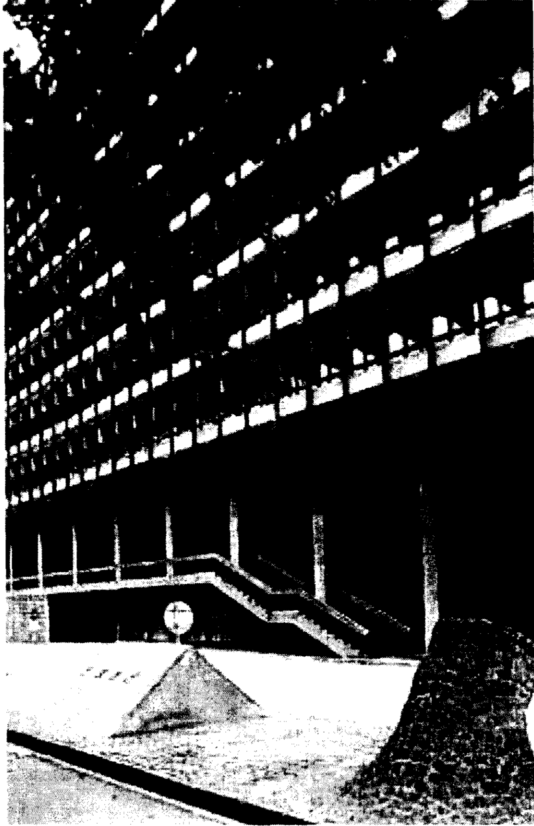


Fig. 3.3. Kenzo Tange's Tokyo City Hall, 1957, which was destroyed and Tange designed the new City Hall in **Fig. 3.4.** The drastic change that occurs in Tokyo in a short period of time.

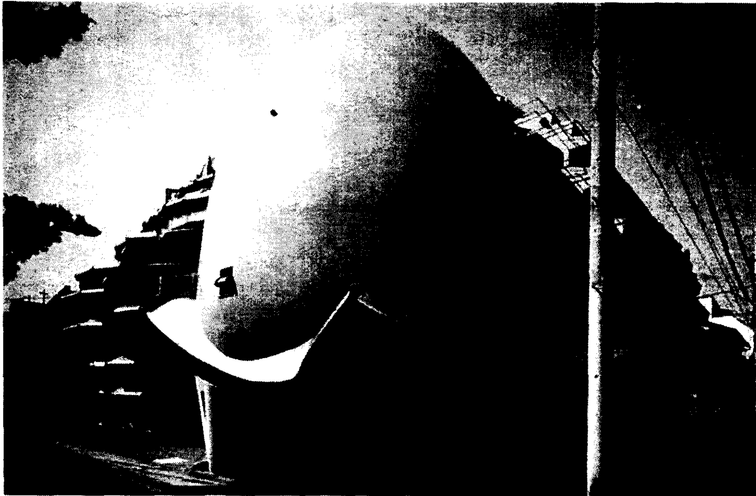


Fig. 3.5. Masaharu Takasaki, Crystal Light. This building was built in 1987 and destroyed in 1990 without ever being used. It was replaced by another more profitable structure.

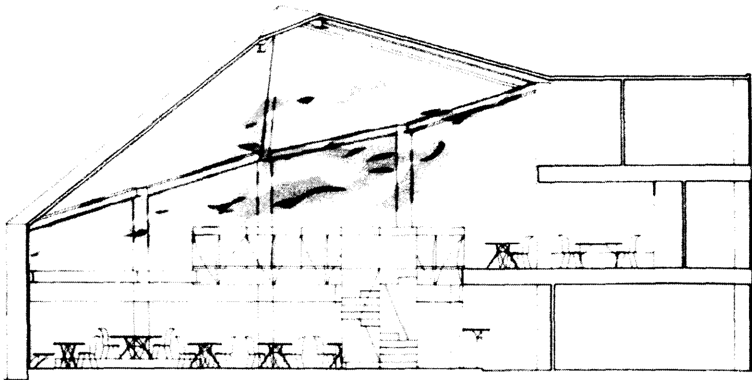


Fig. 3.6. Toyo Ito, Nomad Pub, Tokyo, 1986. Designed within two weeks in 1986, it has been replaced with something else.

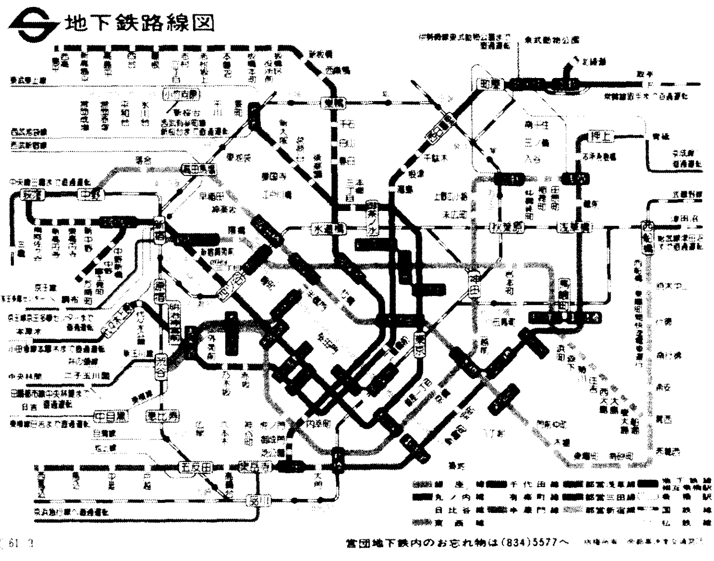


Fig. 3.7. The Subway map of Tokyo, showing that it is an agglomeration of many small towns that do not add up to one whole.

Fig. 3.8. Meisho Sugoroku game of the Edo era. The parts of the city do not add up to one whole.
The *sugoroku* game shows the means of understanding the city in the Japanese mind. The city is not centered on a famous landmark; it is the linkage of points constructed in people's mind.

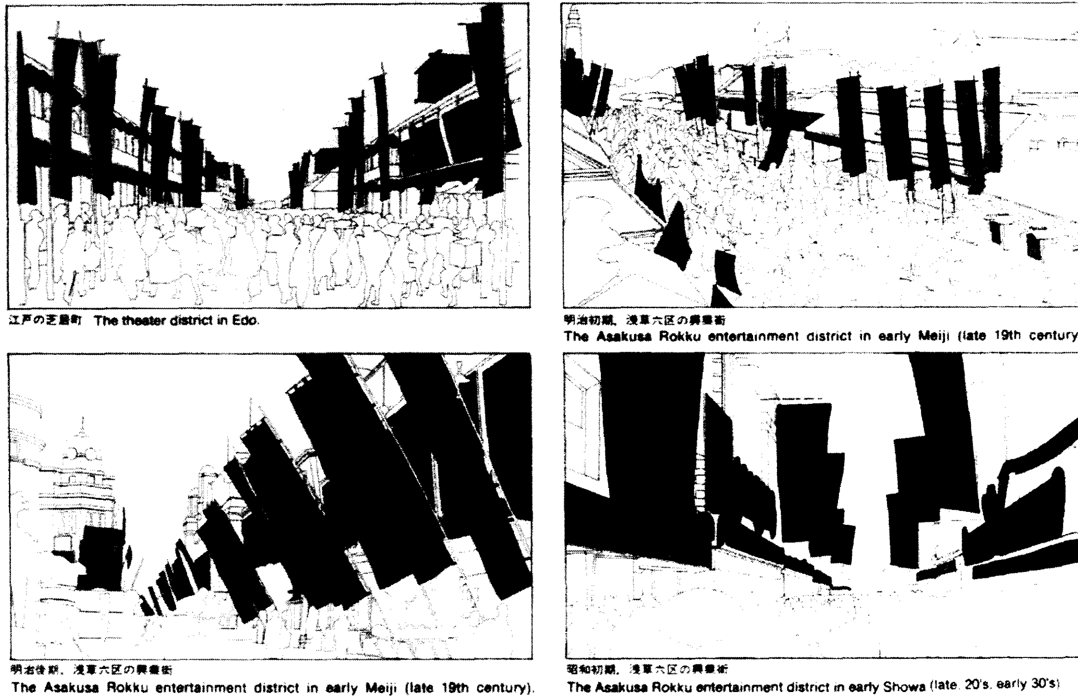


Fig. 3.9. Since the Edo era, banners and signs overcome architecture.
It is noticed how the urban theater of Tokyo is carried on since the Edo era, leading to the architecture of signs.

Fig. 3.10. Urban landscape in Shinjuku, Tokyo. At night, architecture appears to be replaced by neon lights hanging in the air.

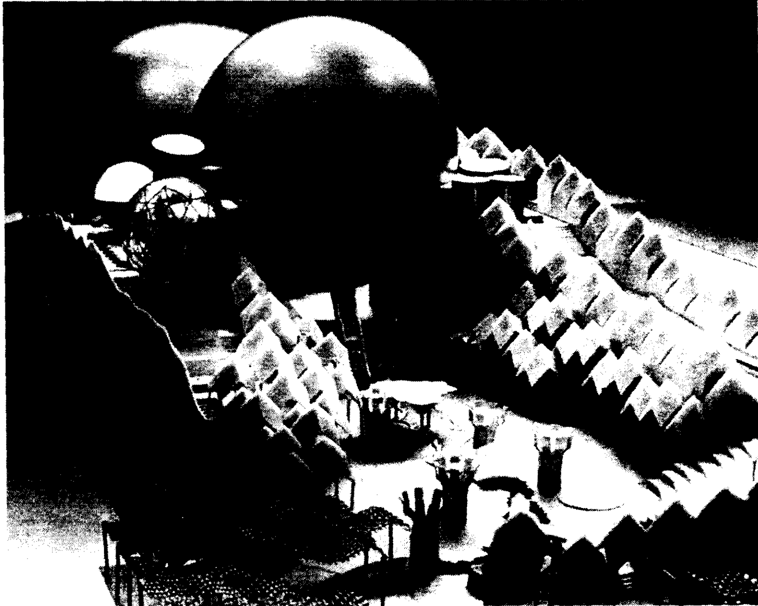


Fig. 3.11. Itsuko Hasegawa, Shonendai Center. The city is a metaphor of nature, and the elements of nature are reflected in the materials used.
Itsuko Hasegawa intends to redefine 'architecture as another nature'. She shapes her works as complex assemblages analogous to nature.

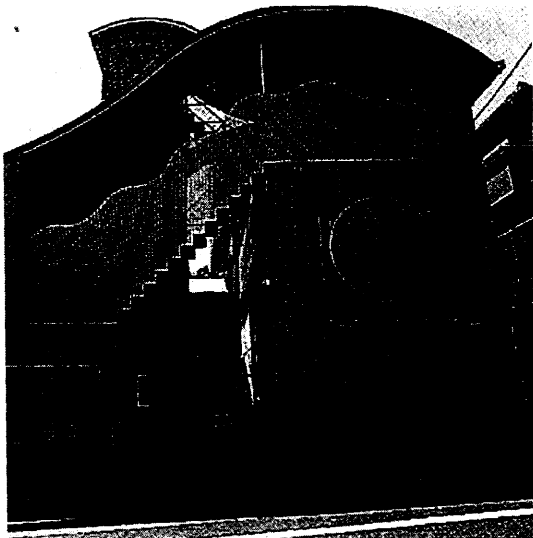


Fig. 3.12. Itsuko Hasegawa, House in Nerima. The simulation of nature in architectural forms. It is also a trial towards a new technological vernacular.

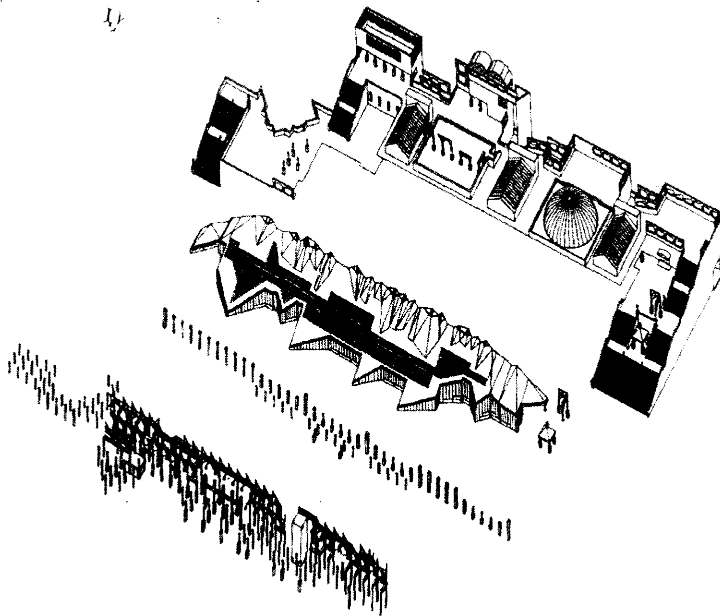
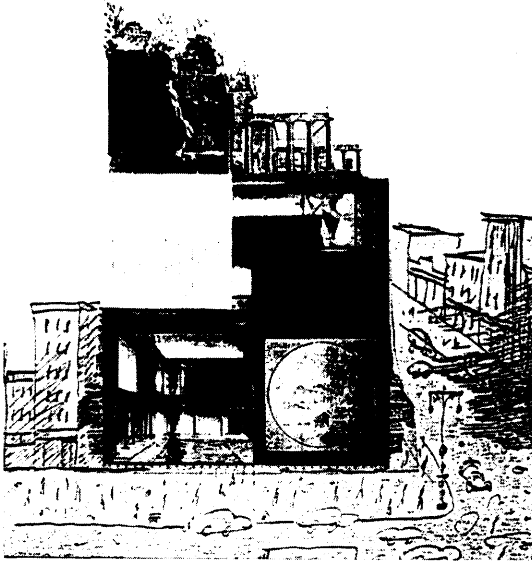


Fig. 3.13, 3.14. Hiroshi Hara, Iida Museum. Forms of hills, trees, etc. and highly polished materials evoke nature in architecture.
His undulating forms, designed with highly polished aluminum plates, are to remind us of such natural formations as clouds, mist and foliage both outside and inside.



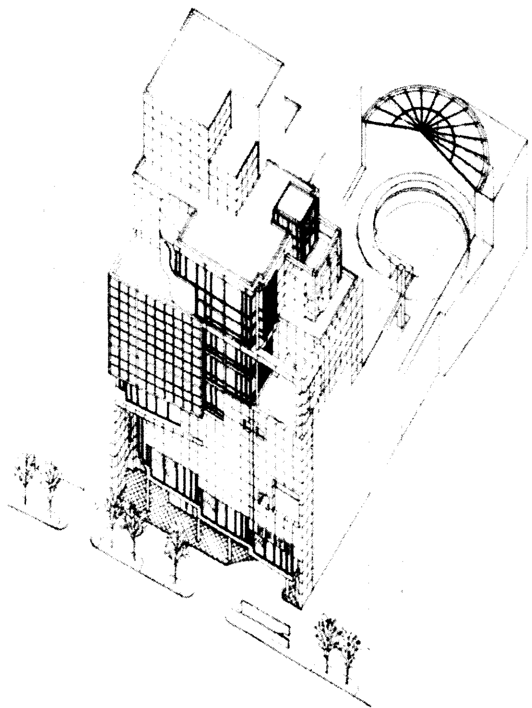


Fig. 3.15, 3.16. Fumihiko Maki, Spiral, Tokyo. Images of the city as a ruinous acropolis, and building over it and out of it.
Fumihiko Maki refers to a ruinous acropolis when imaging the upper part of his Spiral building in Tokyo, in reference to his interpretation of the city as a metaphorical archaeological site.

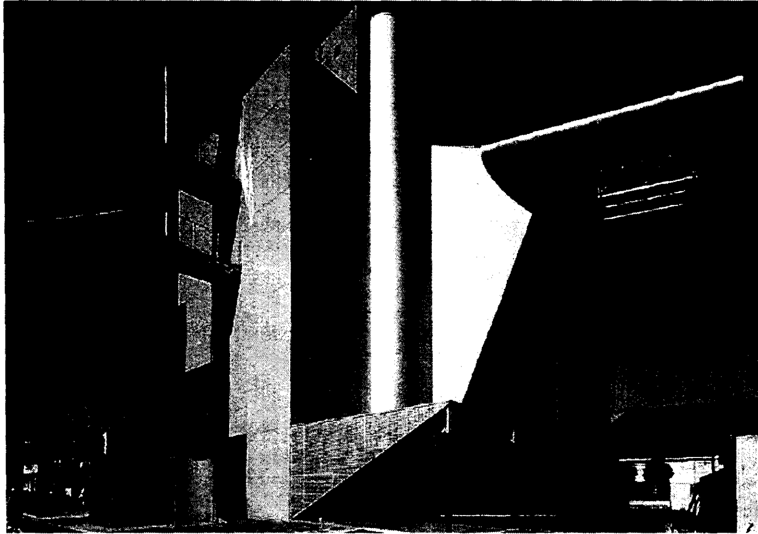
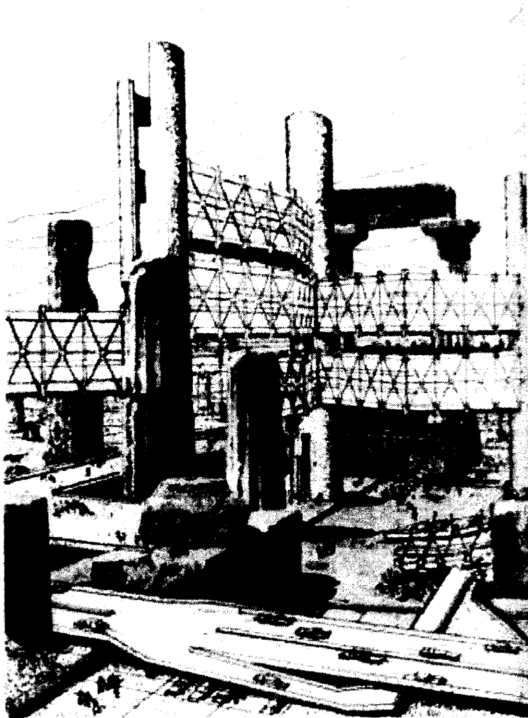


Fig. 3.17. Kazuo Shinohara, TIT Centennial Hall, Tokyo. "The City in the Air" of Isozaki is repeated here by considering the city as topography and building on it, and out of it.



3.18. "The City in the Air", Arata Isozaki.

Fig. 3.19. Kazuo Shinohara, TIT Centennial, Tokyo. He considers the city as topography and builds over it, in a detached way from his environment.

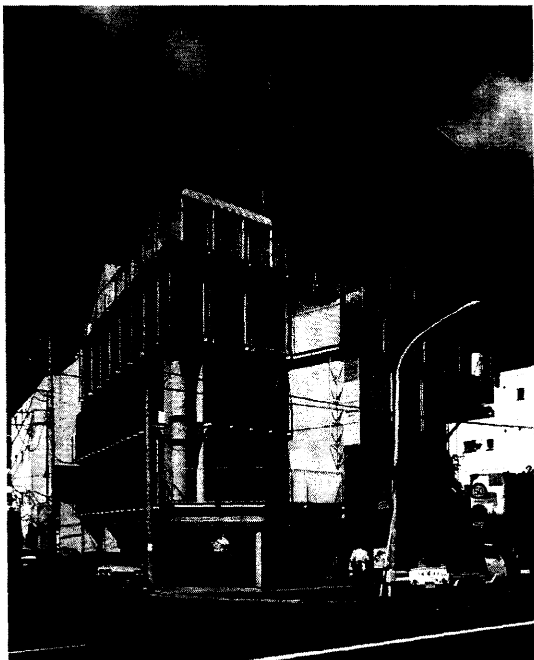
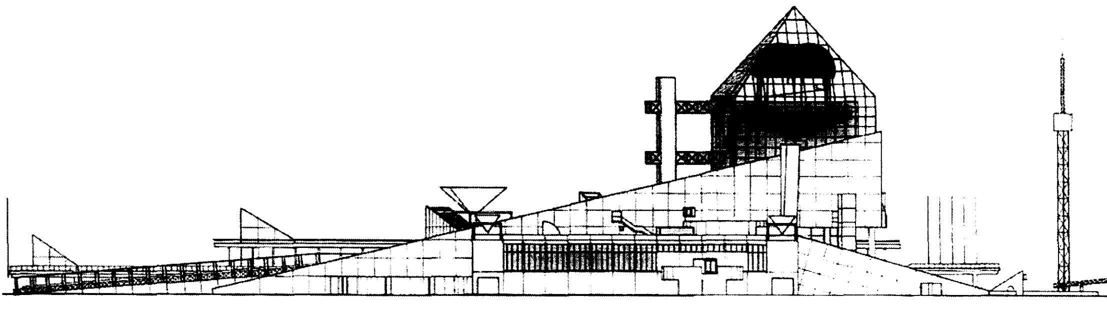


Fig. 3.20. Riken Yamamoto, Rotunda, Yokohama. Riken Yamamoto calls the 'city as topography.' Rotunda is designed to comply with the characterless suburban setting of Yokohama.

Fig. 3.21, 3.22.. Minoru Takeyama, Tokyo Port Terminal. Artificial Hills over the borrowed landscape. Architecture is also penetrated by natural elements such as wind and sun.
He is interpreting the city as an archaeological site.



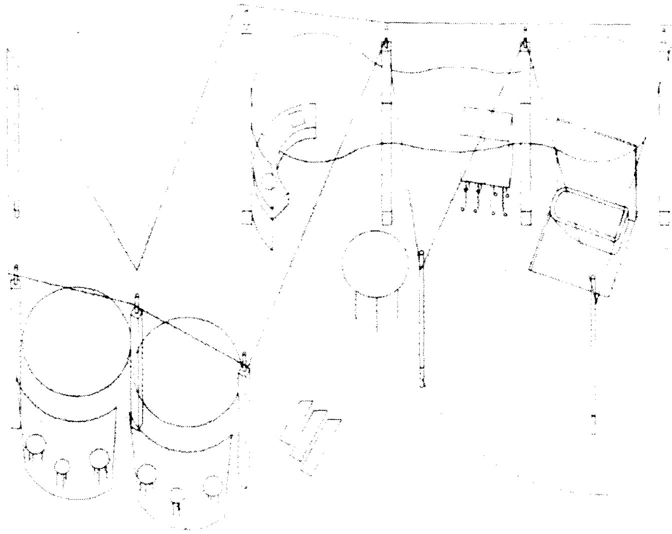


Fig. 3.23, 3.24. Kazuyo Sejima, Platform #2.
Sejima evokes fluid spaces by performance, suggesting an architecture as site that is generated by actions, a 'place' denoted by temporal potential capacity rather than a lasting construct. Also, this 'nomadic architecture' is limited to thin, protective roofs, like tents floating above airy spaces, subject to light and shadow.

Fig. 3.25, 3.26. Tadao Ando, Honpukuji Temple, Awaji-shima. This building creates a special relationship between architecture and the reality of the land. The earthwork is neither landscaping nor gardening. It is an active part of the building.

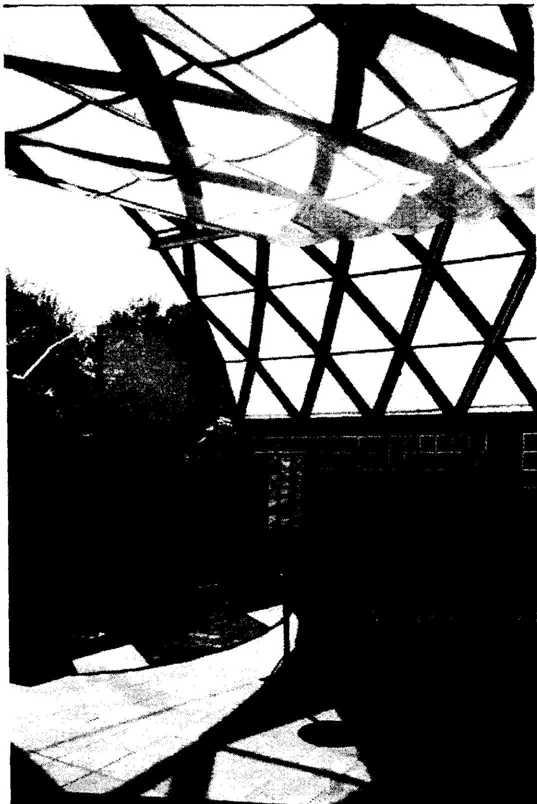


Fig. 3.27, 3.28. Toyo Ito, Silver Hut, Tokyo. The architecture of Urban Nomads. It is formed by natural elements such as wind and sunshine. Life of people is in flux. It is a 'primitive hut', but conceived in the modern urban environment (or jungle) of Tokyo. Instead of wood and logs, it is built with lightweight, available and cheap metallic materials of today.

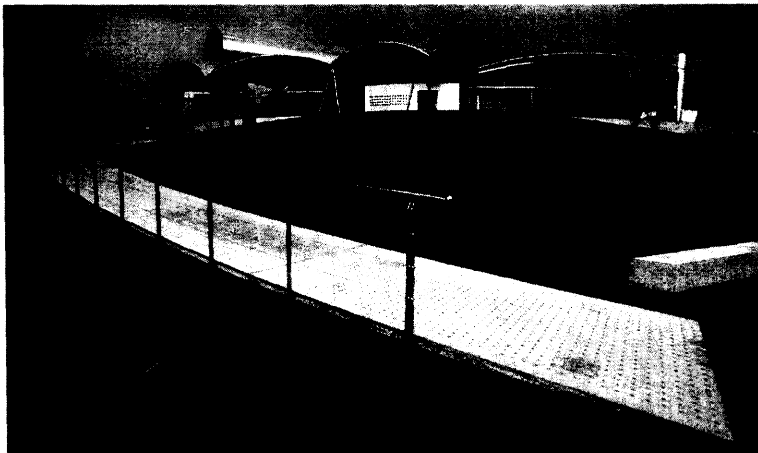


Fig. 3.29, 3.30. Toyo Ito, Yatsushiro Museum, Kumamoto. Life of people as urban nomads, and using nature as integral part of the building. Like Tadao Ando, the earthwork is an active part of the building.

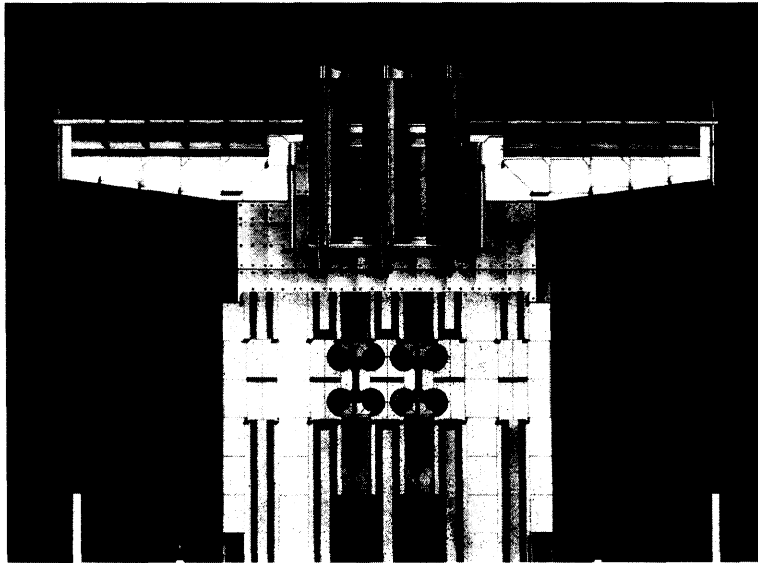


Fig. 3.31. Shin Takamatsu, Syntax,, Kyoto.
Resembling a robot, the building has no connection whatsoever with the rest of its urban environment.

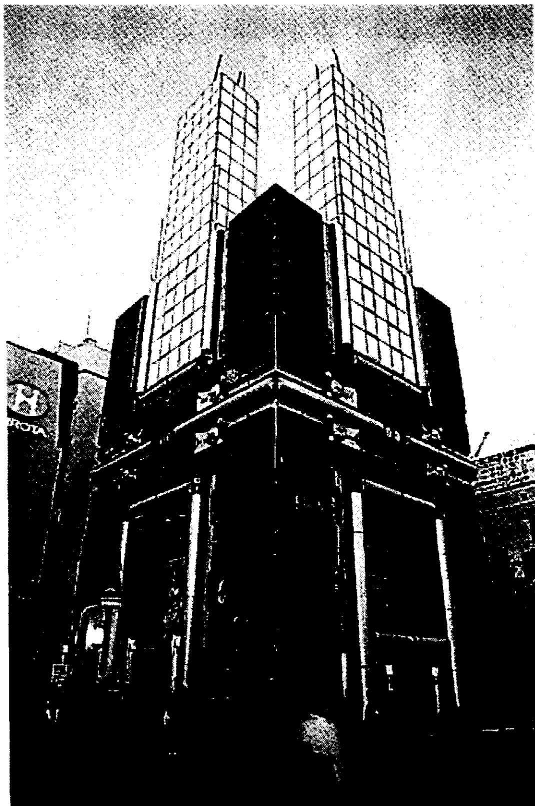


Fig. 3.32. Shin Takamatsu, Kirin Plaza, Osaka.
Technology is a computer-controlled system of electric signs. Like the Japanese city, it is superficial. It is an urban theater, a stage set. It is a difficult, highly elaborated and personal style and monuments in search for a meaning.

Fig. 3.33. Toyo Ito participating in the urban theater with his Urban Egg in Tokyo. The ultimate form of adapting to commercialism.

Fig. 3.34. Hajime Yatsuka, Tarlazzi Building. A collection of fragments in architecture. It is an architecture that floats 'on the sea of signs', resonating with the urban theater of Tokyo.