A Guide to the Next Exhibition

Arata Isozaki
12×5=60

August 31 Sun., 2015 - January 12 Mon., 2014

Organizers : WATARI-UM, The Watari Museum of Contemporary Art / Bruno Taut
Exhibition Committee
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Closed: Mondays (except Sep.15, Oct.13, Nov.3, 24, Dec.1, 8, 15, 22, 29, Jan.12) Nov.31- Jan.3
Opening Hours: 11:00 to 19:00 (open till 21:00 on Wednesdays)
Admission Fee : Adult 1,000 yen / Student (under 25 years) 800 yen
/ Elementary and Junior-high school student 500yen / Adult over 70years 700yen
a two-person ticket 1600 yen / a two-student ticket 1200 yen
* Ticket with signature is valid throughout the exhibition period.

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From the sketch book:
Casa de Salvador Dali
Cadaques, Portlligat, Spain 2009
Arata Isozaki 12×5 = 60 : bibliographical introduction

This is an exhibition that focuses on Arata Isozaki’s concept of "Thoughts Beyond Architecture." The term "Thoughts Beyond Architecture" used here has two aspects: firstly, the exteriority of architecture that has the ability to concurrently conceive (mannerism) or become concerned with cultural representations of contemporary art, music, moving images, and photography (fields which are contiguous yet irreducible to architecture); secondly, the modern (building) as a dead letter of the previous method of cultural representation mobilized to dismantle and reorganize the theoretical and ideological language of "Architecture." It is no exaggeration to say that this bilateral construction is the tactic of Arata Isozaki, an artist-architect who has exceeded the occupation as an architect. By focusing on his uncanny ability to transcend disciplines, and interpreting his character metaphorically as a "man of arts and letters," the exhibition visualizes "Thoughts Beyond Architecture," a conceptual process within Isozaki’s complex oeuvre that past exhibitions have not adequately addressed.

The venue is centrally organized around the one-to-one model of the study in Karuizawa called the Tree-House (the "tree" here means "bird" in Japanese pronunciation), which represents "Thoughts Beyond Architecture." Isozaki leaves his atelier in Tokyo during summer to work at this Tree-House where he disavows his occupation as an architect. In this exhibition, we examine how the "man of arts and letters" utilizes his "place to live" to propagate his thoughts on "Architecture" to the rest of the world.

Isozaki’s view of the city dwellers today as creatures caged in a three-dimensional lattice birdcage has led him to advocate a place to live. This “dwelling in the context of true nature” is a nest for birds and animals that undermine the conventional human birdcage. Then it is perhaps possible to consider the notional undertone of the Tree-House as a resounding basso continuo in the key of "Thoughts Beyond Architecture." This model of a "place to live" is akin to a bird nest rather than a birdcage.

To begin with, "Thoughts Beyond Architecture" concerning the bird harks back to Angel Cage - a human-sized birdcage designed using his ruler shaped like Marilyn Monroe’s shapely outline – exhibited in MAN transFORM (1976), which was conceptualized by his dear friend Hans Hollein and based on the theme of "design." In this piece, a human with wings is confined in a cage. Of Angel Cage, Isozaki said:

“The vision from the outside and the vision from the inside, the standpoint of the designer and the standpoint of the designed, are necessarily presented in an absolutely opposite fashion despite their seeming interchangeability. However, this fact seems to be lost to the designers. Which position should one occupy?”

This thinking was first developed in the MAN transFORM exhibition. However, this metaphor of the cage is a play on word that expands on the theme explored in the highly acclaimed exhibition MA: Space-Time in Japan (1978).

This exhibition focuses on non-architectural elements emerging out of Tree-House that operates as a hub for "Thoughts Beyond Architecture." The compositional layout of the exhibition is broken up into five themes based on the network of Isozaki’s thinking and each theme presented as a list of twelve talking points. They are: "12 Thoughts Beyond Architecture," "12 Collaborative Works," "12 Places to Live," "12 Travels (The Oriental Volume)," "12 Travels (The Occidental Volume)." We are pleased to present you the actual face of "Thoughts Beyond Architecture" that significantly departs from the past exhibitions of Isozaki’s work.

In “Interviews with Arata Isozaki in Asia” (2008, Shinkenchiku-sha Co., Ltd.), in response to Lee Sang-leeem’s question on how he would like to be remembered by the younger generation, he answered: I would like to be remembered as an architect who practiced architecture and thought about architecture. Also as “Man of art & letter” who expressed his architecture in other areas, like writing, exhibition, and art, in an effort to locate architecture firmly at the center of culture.


In fact clients from all over the world proposed their request even to this study, regardless of architecture or beyond architecture, the <Tree-house> often became a new scene of incident. For instance, it is the setting of the episode concerning the request of the disco club Palladium in NY which we will focus in this exhibition (“Image Game” 1990, Kajima Institute Publishing Co., Ltd.), and many interviews for the documentary film of the film director Michael Blackwood was made at this site.


The Monroe ruler was produced in 1965, a curved ruler exclusive to the Arata Isozaki & Associates, used in the designing of furniture and of course architecture. We focus on this as well in our exhibition.

Han Hollein (1934-2014), architect

The icon of the angel in Fra’ Angelico “the Annunciation” is enlarged to life-size. Angelico is a play on words for Angel.

From the MAN transFORMS exhibition (“Image Game” Kajima Institute Publishing Co., Ltd., 1990). He has also stated: For humans, isn’t architecture with the nature of a birdcage? Various cages are designed from the outside. But to the dweller it is only one window. ... Should the designer be inside? Is there space only on the outside? Or should he stand at the surface of the birdcage, where it is the boundary between the inside and outside.
1/1 scale model of the study in Karuizawa called the <Tree-house>

12 Thoughts Beyond Architecture

- White House 1957
- something happens 1962
- Monroe Ruler 1965
- Film: “The Other Man’s Face” Hiroshi Teshigawara 1965
- “From Space towards Environment” 1966 + EXPO’70
- “Ma-Espace/Temps au Japon”(MA:Space-Time in Japan) 1978
- Film: “Ki (Breathing)” Toshio Matsumoto 1980
- Disco Club “Palladium” 1985
- “Tokyo is Photography” Kishin Shinoyama 1985
- Film: “Ma:Space/Time in The Garden of Ryoan-Ji” Takahiko Imura 1989
- 12 Any Conferences
- 6th International Architecture Exhibition, la Biennale di Venezia, Japanese Pavilion “Fracture” 1996
- Video: “The Noble Quran Oasis” Daizaburo Harada 2014

12 Collaborative Works

- Taro Okamoto “Taro Okamoto Exhibition-Spatial Composition According to Density of Light” (Seibu Department Stores) 1964
- Jiro Takamatsu “Kage no Heya (Room of Shadows)” 1974 (Fukuoka Mutual Bank Headquarters 1971)
- Tadashi Suzuki Toga Art Park of Toyama Prefecture “Togamura Sanbo Theater” 1982 Shizuoka Performing Arts Center “Daendo” 1997
- Isamu Noguchi 42nd Venice Biennale representing United States of America 1986 “Isamu Noguchi” exhibition (Yurakuchu Art Forum) 1985
- Tadanori Yokoo “Tokyo: Form and Spirit” exhibition 1986 (Walker Art Center)
- Kiju Yoshida Opera “Madame Butterfly” 1990 (Opera de Lyon)
- Anish Kapoor “LUCERNE FESTIVAL ARK NOVA” 2013 (Matsushima)
12 Places to Live 1998~1999

- Letter 1: CASA MALAPARTE, Capri, Curzio Malaparte
- Letter 2: UNE PETITE MAISON, Lac, Le Corbusier
- Letter 3: VILLA DR. FRANTISEK MÜLLER, Praha, Adolf Loos
- Letter 4: LA MALCONTENTA (VILLA FOSCAI), Venezia, Andrea Palladio
- Letter 5: HILL HOUSE, Helensburgh, Charles Rennie Mackintosh
- Letter 6: E1027 ROQUEBRUNE, Cap Martin, Eileen Gray
- Letter 7: MELNIKOV HOUSE, Moscow, Konstantin Melnikov
- Letter 8: MARGARETHE STONBOROUGH WITTEGENSTEIN HAUS, Wien, Ludwig Wittgenstein
- Letter 9: SAMUEL FREEMAN HOUSE, Hollywood, Frank Lloyd Wright
- Letter 10: BO-SEN KHO-AN, Kyoto, Ensu Kobori
- Letter 11: LAKE SHORE DRIVE APARTMENTS, Chicago, Mies van der Rohe
- Letter 12: TOMBA PER LUIGI NONO, Venezia, Arata Isozaki

12 Travels (The Orient Volume)

12 Travels (The Occident Volume)

Timeline for 12×5=60
Arata Isozaki

Born 1931 in Oita City. In 1954 graduated from the Department of Architecture in the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Tokyo. In 1963 established Arata Isozaki & Associates, the base from which he has continued to work ever since. From his 1960s work such as Oita Prefectural Library, to his 1990s work in locations such as far afield as Barcelona, Orlando, Kraków, Nagi in Okayama Prefecture, Kyoto, Nara, La Coruña, Akiyoshidai in Yamaguchi Prefecture and Berlin, to his 21st century work in the Middle East, China, Central Asia, and elsewhere, Isozaki has created an architecture so personal in its ideas and spaces that it defies characterization in any single school of thought. At the same time he resists temptation to apply a signature style to his jobs, preferring instead to create architectural solutions specific to the political, social and cultural contexts of the client and site in question.

His activities, spanning over half century, have gone beyond thought, art, design, music, film, theatre and of course architecture, and they have raised questions spanning multiple ages and multiple disciplines.

Related Events

November 3 (Culture Day) Concert Plan/Composition: Toshio Hosokawa Performing: Sayaka Shoji [violin], Mayumi Miyata [Sho]

Many events during the exhibition period such as Terunobu Fujimori + Arata Isozaki Interview, Performance by Min Tanaka are in plan.

Please inquire information at WATARI-UM, Watari Museum of Contemporary Art.

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