

From the Director

We welcome Japan, Archipelago of the House to our shores for its first North American venue. It comes to us after touring Europe, Japan, and Australia. The show is organized into three sections. "Yesterday's Houses" collects fifteen seminal projects that illustrate the effort of architects building in Japan to balance tradition and modernity. We are fortunate to be able to include models of each project in our display. "Today's Houses" consists of an array of freestanding panels occupying the center of our main gallery. They depict a curated selection of twenty contemporary projects, documented in drawings and photographs. Finally, "Houses of Tokyo" gathers thirty-six photographs taken by Jérémie Souteyrat. These photographs are encounters with exemplars of contemporary house design, captured in passing and evocatively juxtaposed with their urban context.

I would like to thank the curatorial team and, in particular, Manuel Tardits for working with us to tailor the exhibit to our space. At the School of Architecture, I wish to thank Dean Deborah Berke for her support and direction. Sunil Bald was instrumental in making the connections necessary to bring the show here. I am grateful to Alison Walsh, exhibition coordinator and model maker; Eric Sparks and True Line Productions for the elegant build out; Erin Kim for adapting the

graphics for our space; and our installation team. Finally I wish to thank graphic designer David Reinfurt of O R G inc., and Nina Rappaport, editor of this publication.

Andrew Benner
Director of Exhibitions

Preface

To design a house is a profound task for architects. It represents an intimate dialogue with a client while also providing us the opportunity to address broader questions of how we should live today. It is a problem both tangled in the everyday and deeply embedded in the most profound roots of culture and identity. This type of project often provides a forum for young architects to develop their own voices. Indeed, home design plays a key role in our curriculum at Yale, first year professional students design and build a house each year through the Jim Vlock First Year Building Project.

This is why I am so pleased that we are able to bring *Japan, Archipelago of the House* to our gallery. It provides a sustained look at a group of architects taking on this small, yet critical, type of project. The fact that these architects are working in Japan is crucial. The traditions of construction and the vibrancy of contemporary architectural culture there informs the particular choices made and the unique sensibilities on display. The exhibition includes a rich legacy of houses along with contemporary examples. The architectural character of the houses is carefully documented along with the life they support. Jérémie Souteyrat's photos of Tokyo add a layer of context, capturing the houses alongside their neighbors and the bustle of urban life. We can appreciate the particular genesis of each

Japanese house while also gleaned lessons on how to house ourselves the North America as our cities become denser and our lives more interconnected.

I would like to thank Sunil Bald for directing our attention to the show and its curatorial team. Here at the school, I would like to also thank our Director of Exhibitions, Andrew Benner, and our Exhibitions Coordinator, Alison Walsh.

Deborah Berke
Dean

Japan, Archipelago of the House
日本、家の列島
— Manuel Tardits

Homes, Milestones

"Thanks to Katsura Imperial Villa at Kyoto, Japan is one of the rare countries in which a major historical monument is a house. In the twentieth century, whereas America and Europe may certainly have produced numerous domestic architectural masterpieces, Japan alone has attempted to bring about — and indeed achieved — a real and permanent architectural

revolution based on a profusion of houses."¹

The individual house in Japan represents an essential element of architecture, urbanity, and society. These houses go beyond a strict response to domestic programs. Their fresh inspiration and lack of habitability or intimacy, allows us to understand them through a careful study of the conditions of their production. Many recurring themes beyond the changing ideologies and personalities of the Japanese architecture scene underpin house design. But what do we actually mean by the Japanese

house? If such an object really exists, it conveys a vague and fluctuating notion that Japan, behind its veil of exoticism, encourages a relationship to a living tradition. We can distinguish two types of contemporary housing. The first made for the average individual features wood craftsmanship with mannerist tendencies. Facing meticulously arranged gardens and evocative of the new Sukiya (a late sixteenth-century residential style popular among upper-classes), these houses epitomize the general public's understanding of the Japanese house. In contrast are

Forest House Karuizawa by Junzō Yoshimura, 1962



Photograph by © Manuel Tardits



Receptacle by Jun Igarashi Architects

Photograph by © Jérémie Souteyrat

architect-designed contemporary houses from the last half-century. These are the focus of this exhibition.²

Birth of a Tradition

After the 1853 colonial domination of the West, local architecture in Japan reflected the need to escape the political upheavals. The Meiji government (1868 – 1912) chose a strategy of importing wholesale political systems, education, and technology from the West. Foreign consultants, professors, and technicians predominated while Japanese civil servants played a large role when they were sent abroad. Architecture became Western and eclectic through the 1920s.

However, after this first shock wave came a rebalancing that celebrated Eastern values from the 1890s. This architecture incorporated curious pan-Asiatic examples, with British India as more representative than local construction in their imposition of a modern Asian style. During the 1930s, with nationalism linked to the rise of Japanese military power and its colonial conquests, Asia ceased to offer such a relevant model. Japan then turned inward and the public architecture began to refer to its own Shinto temples, vestiges of the main indigenous religion and in contrast to more pan-Asiatic Buddhism. In the domestic realm, architects were inspired by the Katsura Imperial Villa and medieval teahouses of the

late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, as precursors of the European avant-gardes. However, the military debacle of 1945 and the economic ruin of the country shuffled the deck for a moment. Once again, after the defeat of the prevailing models from the Meiji era, Japan was in search of itself.

After World War II, Japan and its "economic miracle" resulted in its growth as the world's second largest economy, after the U.S. While the Japanese economic model and its culture were envied, it is still poorly understood. The economy grew until the burst of the 1990s speculative bubble, a shock from which the archipelago is still struggling to recover. Japan, industrious

and amnesic, tends to destroy its physical environment, hybridizing or freezing it by creating stereotypical artifacts and tourist sites. Today, Japan with its uncertain economic future, and less certain of its cultural differences, is the fruit of this history. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, does the merging of modernity and tradition still operate as the dialectic of Westernization versus Japan-ness?

The mansion of those best able to have their way is always the best

The 1920s came to redefine Japan-ness with the emergence of a new generation of architects.

These architects included more critical Japanese connoisseurs of the West, and Westerners, who brought their perspectives while visiting or staying in the country. This debate and re-evaluation is understandable if we remember that architecture as a discipline was an imported one and its teaching gave pride of place to the West. The powerful, industrialized, and urbanized Japan of the 1920s, which gained a colonial empire after its military victory over the Russians at the turn of the century, was no longer the timid nation of 1853. During this time of rising nationalism, Japanese architects discussed their cultural roots and the relevance of copying foreign ideas and styles. It became

a question of reviving a culture, rather than attempting to adopt a Western-led modernist agenda. Looking back, this synthesis bordered on a kind of schizophrenia that underlies the houses designed by several major architects of the period.

Sutemi Horiguchi, one of the founders of the Bunriha movement that recalled the Viennese Secession, called for an architecture rejecting adherence to the classical Western styles and in favor of a personal and subjective pursuit of art. In the mid-1930s, he designed houses, such as the Okada Villa, which have an expressive Janus-faced composition: one half is made of large white, cubic volumes, while the other



On the cherry blossom by A.L.X.

Photograph by © Jérémie Souteyrat assisted by Bruno Bellec

KN House by Kochi Architect's Studio

Photograph by © Jérémie Souteyrat



is covered by a large pitched roof, with tatami mats in the room, and shoji screen walls and an articulated structure. Horiguchi was also one of the first to recast tradition by focusing on the architecture of Shinto shrines, gardens, and medieval tea pavilions. The Czech-American Antonin Raymond, with his colleagues Junzō Yoshimura and Isoya Yoshida realized some of the most beautiful houses of the postwar period. These were in the fashionable Sukiya style and influenced by the craftsmanship and carpentry of minka vernacular houses, built by carpenters rather architects. Although their contribution is not always recognized due to the syncretism of their creations, it exemplifies the centrality of

wood, which remains the ultimate material of contemporary Japanese houses. The aesthetic that still shapes our views on the Japanese tradition dates back to this period. Japan-ness (albeit a rather vague and overused term) gets defined as essentially a tradition of construction with certain principles of spatial composition, a rustic and refined material palette, and a special relationship of houses with their gardens.

German architect Bruno Taut's 1937 publication of Houses and People of Japan endorsed a revisited and revised version of this tradition that brought Japan international attention. Taut had been invited to visit the Katsura Villa, an imperial prince's early seventeenth-century retreat

hidden in a garden in the Kyoto suburbs that rests on light columns and faces a pond. After the war, generations of Japanese and foreign architects, including Kenzo Tange, Walter Gropius, and Arata Isozaki, found in Katsura the epitome of the key principles behind European-led Modern architecture: fluidity of the plan, openness towards the outside, truth in the use of materials, separation between structure and partitioning, and modular principles in the repetition of components through tatami mats and post-and-beam construction.

The defeat of 1945 left Japan destroyed, deprived of its colonies, and invaded and controlled by the Americans. During the ensuing Korean



Delta by Architecton

Photograph by © Jérémie Souteyrat

conflict and the Communist threat of the Cold War, the United States helped to restart the economy of their new ally. Physical and ideological reconstructions were both necessary. The period of high growth that followed was characterized by the Americanization of behavior, a demographic boom, environmental problems, and the destruction of old buildings followed by a fast, brutal and amnesic reconstruction of the cities. The American influence also helped re-launch the debate between tradition and modernity. Hence, Kenzō Tange and Kiyoshi Seike's

modern pavilions placed with delicacy on the ground, showed an underlying dialogue with the American works of Mies van der Rohe and the California Case Study Houses. But Kazuo Shinohara began a more radical line of questioning that was critical of the way post war houses had become a generic product, eclectic in style and invading suburbs for miles and miles.

Shadows on Praise

The dialectic of Tradition/ Japan-ness versus Modernity/ West, while fluctuating, has continued to color speech and thought while also igniting

a more recent debate on the conditions of urban life. The rise of the BRICs and the bursting of the speculative bubble of the 1980s, a sign that Japan was not an economic exception, also contributed to this development. Today in a Japan that thinks less insistently of being alone in facing the West, the younger generation no longer firmly claims an outlook of generic Japan-ness, instead favoring an inward and personal gaze. Kazuyo Sejima addressed this change when she said, "I never consider traditional architecture as an entity or a model to compare myself with. I have it in my blood and it works

inside of me. So I think that it is the Westerners who analyse Japanese architecture in these terms, rather than the Japanese themselves."³ This revealing answer is perhaps dictated by some weariness after hearing repeatedly the same argument. It contains subtleties too. It signals that when Japanese architects conceptualize their work now, they no longer speak in terms that historians and sociologists have used to characterized Japanese space.

Although some may not believe Sejima, why would one use a Japanese architect to build outside Japan, if it were only to become exotic? Another ambiguous anecdote illustrates this contemporary game

of smoke and mirrors. Kengo Kuma had just completed the construction of the school of music of Aix-en-Provence, France. Its facade of folded aluminum sheets was intended to propose a re-reading of Mont Sainte-Victoire, dear to Cézanne. However, during a lecture about it in Tokyo, he referred to how a number of French commentators had identified a reference to origami in the building, and responded bittersweetly: "Let it be origami."

Similarly, Yasushi Horibe, whose work of quiet houses in local wood and plaster is little known abroad, provocatively declared at a conference that he saw no change in the way humans have lived for the past

2000 years. In other words, a physical and cultural context implies ways of living; responding to it results from a simple intellectual honesty. For them there was no need to emphasize this fact with one's peers, nor did they have to transgress it to make the work sound more original. They naturally design from what inspires them at home but are still international.

In contemporary Japan, the interaction of historical, physical, and socio-economic forces encourages the construction of a large number of new houses along with their rapid obsolescence. Several factors feed into this frenzy of building. First, the predominant mode of

Window House by Yasutaka Yoshimura Architects

Photograph by © Jérémie Souteyrat







House in Uehara by Kazuo Shinohara, 1976

Photograph by © Koji Taki



construction is wood (60 percent of all houses), which is fast and economic, but of low durability. Additionally, the frequency of earthquakes and sometimes fires weakens the buildings, thus shortening their life. A culture of impermanence encourages homeowners to rebuild their homes when they could last a few more years. The burden of inheritance rights prohibits the passing of the properties between the generations. Finally, the economic imperatives of the construction industry create

the need to build relentlessly. Thus is born a domestic culture of the ephemeral, characterized by houses with a short life span (less than twenty-five years), and a low economic hurdle in comparison to the cost of land (which is up to ten times the price of houses in Tokyo). Resting on this rare, expensive and prized soil, the house has become a product, more closely related to fashion, like a car, an electrical appliance or clothes. It is easy then for a new owner to ask a young

architect, whose projects they have seen in a magazine, to design a house that they hope will be original and fitting his tastes. Last but not least, the constraints and culture of the profession also plays a role. The difficulty for young architects to find job opportunities in a country dominated by large construction conglomerates makes the design of domestic spaces attractive. Media attention awaits. "Their impact (that of architects) continues to shrink as their main subject tends to become the

House in Nago by Kazunari Sakamoto 1978

Photograph by © Kazunari Sakamoto



Iron House, Kengo Kuma and Associates

Photograph by © Jérémie Souteyrat

house... " as Patrice Goulet wrote in 1983, in a special issue of *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* devoted to Japanese houses. In the archipelago, designing a house is both an opportunity and a limitation.

What remains in our days?

This exhibition presents fifteen projects called Yesterday's Houses and twenty others named Today's Houses, along with thirty-six photographic portraits of the Houses of Tokyo. A meagre sample, with regard to dozens of magazines and publications that carefully scrutinize

Japanese houses; there is nothing magical in this number. The selection was curated based on the opportunity to visit the projects, the exhibition's size, a willingness to diversify, and a calculated subjectivity. Adding other designers would not have weakened this anthology. Those that know contemporary Japanese architecture will not be surprised by the selection, but should consider our choices in relationship to the themes. These projects allow us to answer our central questions: What is the essence of the Japanese house according to architects and how does a tradition manifest itself?

Notes

¹ Manuel Tardits, Tokyo. Portraits and Fictions, Blou, Le Gac Press, 2011.

² Japon, l'archipel de la maison (Japan, Archipelago of the House). Traveling exhibition, 2014–18. Curators: Véronique Hours, Fabien Mauduit, Jérémie Souteyrat, and Manuel Tardits.

³ Leone Spita, "Saper credere in architettura. Ventinove domande a Kazuyo Sejima, Ryue Nishizawa" ("Knowing How to Believe in Architecture. Twenty-Nine Questions to Kazuyo Sejima, Ryue Nishizawa"), Clean, Naples, 2003.

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| Japan, Archipelago of the House | Paper model by Yale School of Architecture students | Aki-shima House by Taira Nishizawa Architects | Jérémie Souteyrat. All photographs by © Jérémie Souteyrat except where noted | House without a Kitchen by Atelier Takuo Iizuka |
| Checklist | Pavilion of Illusion by Osamu Ishiyama Photographs: exterior and interior by © Studio GAYA (Osamu Ishiyama) | Home and Workshop by Atelier Bow-Wow | Reflection in Mineral by Atelier Tekuto | Tower Machiya by Atelier Bow-Wow |
| Yesterday's Houses | Rowhouse in Sumiyoshi by Tadao Ando Photographs: exterior and interior courtesy © Tadao Ando Paper model by Yale School of Architecture Gallery | KN House by Kochi Architect's Studio | Shell House by Prime | Penguin House by Atelier Tekuto |
| Fifteen monographs of twentieth century houses Plans and texts by Fabien Mauduit, Véronique Hours, and Manuel Tardits Paper models at a scale of 1/50 by I-AUD Meiji University, courtesy Kenchiku Soko (Archi Depo) except where noted by Yale School of Architecture Gallery | House in Uehara by Kazuo Shinohara Photographs: exterior and interior by © Koji Taki Paper model by Yale School of Architecture Gallery | KATA House by Kiwako Kamo & Manuel Tardits | Hatchobori/Ou-An by Ken Yokogawa Architect & Associates | House in a Plum Grove by Kazuyo Sejima and Associates |
| Summer House in Karuizawa by Antonin Raymond Photographs: exterior and interior, © Sugiyama Collection, The Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania | Yamakawa Summerhouse by Riken Yamamoto Photographs: exterior and interior © Ryoji Akiyama. With the support of Toto Ltd | Iron House by Kengo Kuma and Associates | Ambi-Flux by Architecton | Hironaka House by Ken Yokogawa Architects & Associates |
| Maekawa House by Kunio Maekawa Photographs: exterior and interior by © Jérémie Souteyrat | House in Nago by Kazunari Sakamoto Photographs: exterior and interior by © Kazunari Sakamoto Paper model by Yale School of Architecture Gallery | House O by Hideyuki Nakayama Architecture | House in Meguro by Yoritaka Hayashi Architects | India ink house II by Itami Jun Architects |
| Saitô House by Kiyoshi Seike Photographs: exterior and interior by © Chuji Hirayama | Silver Hut by Toyo Ito Photographs exterior and interior by © Tomio Ohashi | House at Hanegi Park – Vista by Shigeru Ban Architects | Delta by Architecton | Lucky Drops by Atelier Tekuto On the cherry blossom by A.L.X. Photograph by © Jérémie Souteyrat assisted by Bruno Bellec |
| Tange House by Kenzô Tange Photographs: exterior and interior © Uchida Michiko | Today's Houses | Komazawa House by Go Hasegawa and Associates | BB by Yo Yamagata Architects | Swimmy House by Starpilots Wood/Berg by Kengo Kuma and Associates |
| Skyhouse by Kiyonori Kikutake Photographs: exterior and interior by © Akio Kawasumi | Twenty monographs of contemporary houses including interviews with the architects and the inhabitants. Drawings: all drawings except plans and sections by courtesy of the architects Plans and sections: Fabien Mauduit, Véronique Hours and Manuel Tardits Interviews: Fabien Mauduit, Véronique Hours and Manuel Tardits Photographs by Jérémie Souteyrat Movie by Jérémie Souteyrat | Cut through House by UGAWARADAI SUKE | Sakuragoaka House by Bariquant | Moriyama House by Office of Ryue Nishizawa |
| Yoshida House by Isoya Yoshida Photographs: exterior and interior by © Manuel Tardits | | House in Zaimokuza by Contemporaries | Doubleblind by October | House NA by Sou Fujimoto Architects |
| Forest House Karuizawa by Junzô Yoshimura SAVE A LINE HERE | | Receptacle by Jun Igarashi Architects | Room room by Takeshi Hosaka Architects | Magritte's by Atelier Tekuto |
| Tower House by Takamitsu Azuma Photographs: exterior and interior by © Osamu Murai | | House in Kamakura by Mikan | Rainy/Sunny by Mount Fuji Architects Studio | Edgeyard by October |
| House in White by Kazuo Shinohara Photographs: exterior by © Shokokusha Photographers, interior by © Hiroshi Ueda | | A Big Gap in Everyday Life by ON design partners | House in Inokashira by Studio NOA | Shimokitazawa by Niizeki Studio |
| | | Boundary House by Atelier Tekuto | House in Wakabadai by Satoshi Okada Architects | |
| | | Terrace House by Tezuka Architects | Kudan house by Sakane Keikaku Sekkei | |
| | | Crossing by UID | Platinum house by TNA | |
| | | Rim Light by mA-style architects | Laatikko Workshop by Kino | |
| | | House in Chiba by Suppose Design Office | I by Jun Aoki & Associates | |
| | | Window House by Yasutaka Yoshimura Architects | Nestled House by milligram architectural studio | |
| | | Tokyo Houses | White Base by Architecton Photograph by © Jérémie Souteyrat assisted by Bruno Bellec | |
| | | Thirty-six houses and their urban context from the series Tokyo no ie (Houses of Tokyo) photographed by | YY House by A.H. Architects | |
| | | | Subdivision by October | |