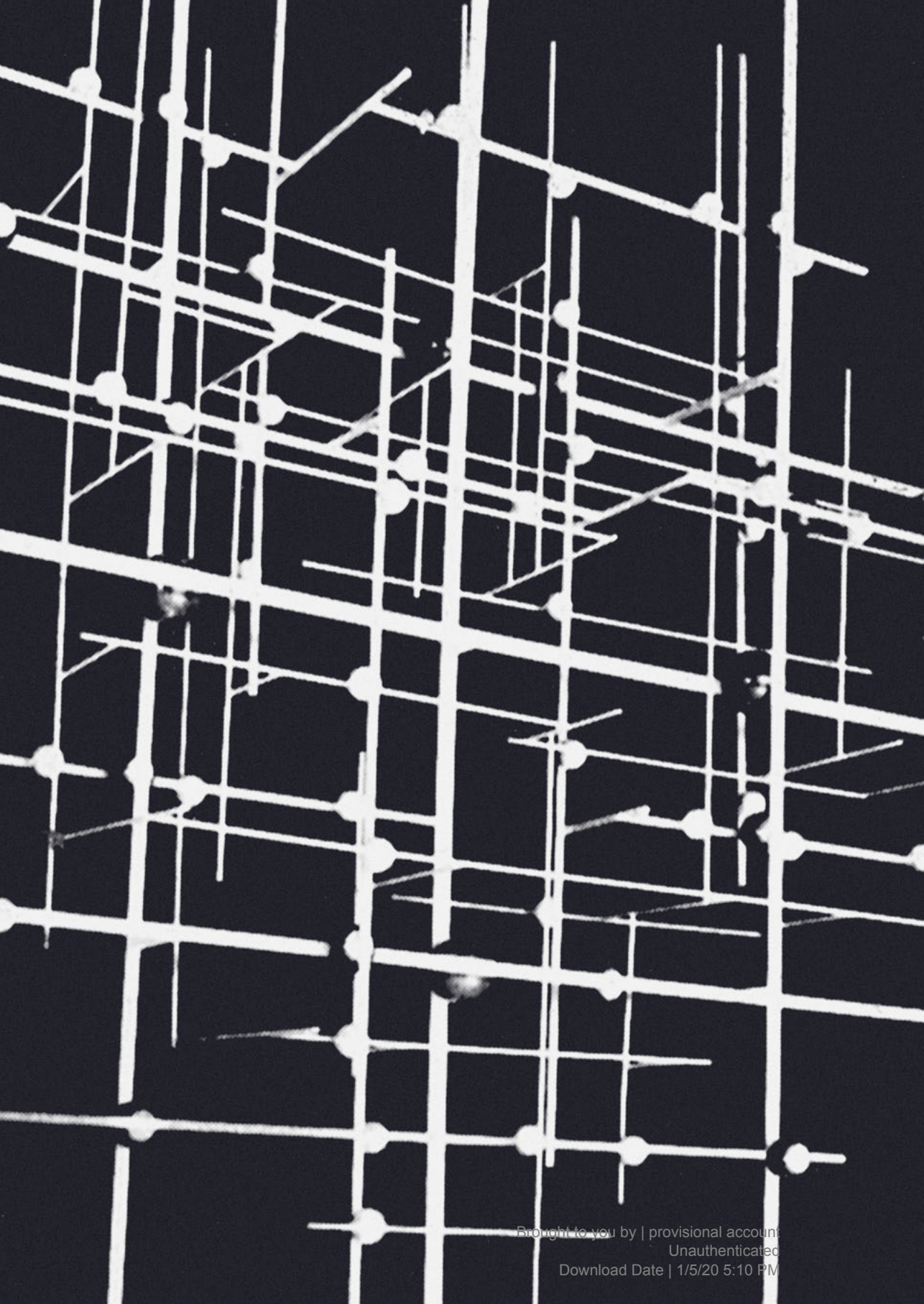


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ENCOUNTERS



FUMIHIKO MAKI

This kind of ambiguous view

Mr. Maki, as a young man, why did you decide to study architecture? Did you have any relationship to architecture during your childhood?

During World War II, I attended high school in Tokyo and thought I would become an aeronautical engineer because I liked to make model planes. But after the war, it was impossible because that profession was prohibited. I still liked to design, to make and build things for the future, so I decided to become an architect.

You studied at the University of Tokyo. Why did you choose this university and who were your most important teachers?

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

Why did you decide to go to the United States to further your studies?

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

Later, you worked in Sert's office and you taught together with him in the urban design program. How did that evolve?

I knew Josep Lluís Sert from Harvard and while I was working in other offices, my classmate Dolf Schnebli was working with him. When Dolf decided to go back to Switzerland, he suggested that I replace him at Sert's office.

Can you describe your experiences in the office of Josep Lluís Sert?

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

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

When you were in the United States, were you still in contact with architects in Japan and did you sometimes travel back to Japan?

Sure. Travelling became easier between the 1950s and 60s, the period during which I was mostly abroad. In 1958, I became a Graham Foundation fellow, and was given the chance to travel for two years. So I came back to Tokyo every once in a while. At that time I became a member of the Metabolists, because of my connection with Kenzo Tange and my colleagues of the Tange lab at the university.

I also had the chance to design my first project in Japan at that time. Kurokawa and Kikutake had already been quite active and, although I was teaching in the United States, I thought that the time had come to start my own practice in Japan. I had never thought of staying in the United States forever.

Metabolism started and became well known internationally. We published the Metabolism manifesto in 1960 and I participated very actively in the Metabolist movement from the very beginning.

You played a special role in the Metabolist movement as the only member outside Japan, travelling a lot and meeting architects from all over the world?

Yes, at that time few people had the same opportunity to travel abroad and meet architects in Europe or the United States as I did.

You also made contact with members of Team X and participated in Team X meetings in Europe?

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

Did you stay in contact with members of Team X after the conference?

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

In 1968, the quite important "PREVI" project in Lima began, involving architects from all over the world, including yourself.

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

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

Metabolist movement and your architecture, isn't it something where influences from international movements from Europe, America and Japan were coming together?

Yes, the Metabolist movement was a hybrid of many ideas, some from Japan and others from Europe, as you describe. It is true, it was a product of many mutual influences and also stimulated reciprocal influences.

Your text on group form, written together with Masato Otaka, was part of the Metabolist manifesto in 1960. Could you describe your interest in group form and the mutual influences you worked with?

When I wrote the text "Group Form," I was interested in investigating systems where individual elements like houses can combine to form a meaningful whole. In 1959 and 1960, I had the chance to make an extensive trip to Asia, the Middle East and Europe. It was an encounter with ancient towns. It was there that I developed the idea of group form. When I visited the Greek islands for example, houses with slight variations of form created a sense of wholeness. That was also group form.

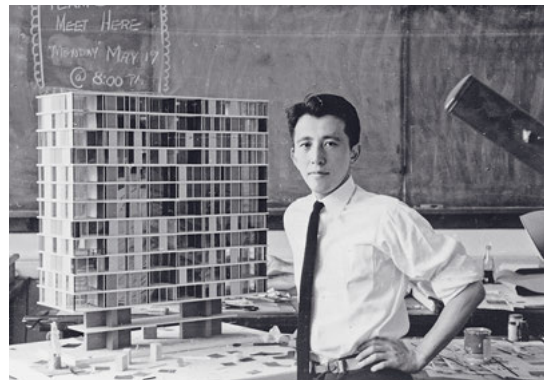
Some architects in Europe, as well as in Japan, began to advocate mega-structures and the investigation of collective form became an important subject, along with the question of how structure and connections are made.

During this time, many architects in Europe and America were interested in linkages and structure or vernacular architecture like Aldo van Eyck, Christopher Alexander or Bernard Rudofsky. Were you in contact with them concerning these topics?

I was friends with Aldo van Eyck and we always talked about these subjects. He was a philosopher of architecture, and I am very sympathetic to his thoughts on architectural structure. Likewise, I knew the work of Christopher Alexander and Bernard Rudofsky. Rudofsky's book *Architecture without Architects* in particular



Meeting with Kenzo Tange



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

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

With regard to vernacular architecture in Japan: In the 1960s, Arata Isozaki and Teiji Ito also conducted a survey on vernacular architecture and traditional towns in Japan.

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

When did you start to work on traditional architecture in Japan and especially on traditional concepts of architecture and aesthetics in Japan?

I was too much of a modernist and I was not really concerned about newly created or recreated traditional buildings, but I was interested in the structure, and in principles like *oku* and *ma*. In the 1960s, Günter Nitschke wrote texts about *ma* and later Arata Isozaki did too, so the *ma*-ideas had already been reintroduced before I became interested in *oku*. My text "Oku" was first published in a Japanese magazine in the 1970s.

I was particularly interested in certain aspects of *oku*, for example, that people going up to temples or shrines do not see the destination, but always have the feeling of moving into unknown places. It is a technique the Japanese have used for centuries and still do.

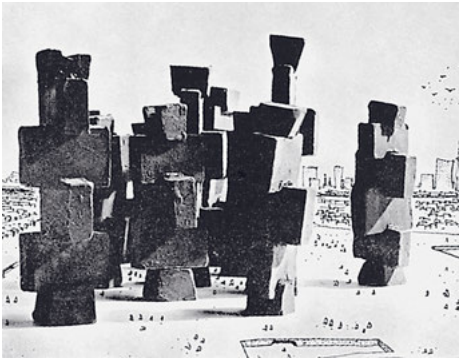
I try to reinterpret those principles into the architecture of today. In our crematorium in Kaze-no-Oka, we used the same technique. You do not see the major space in



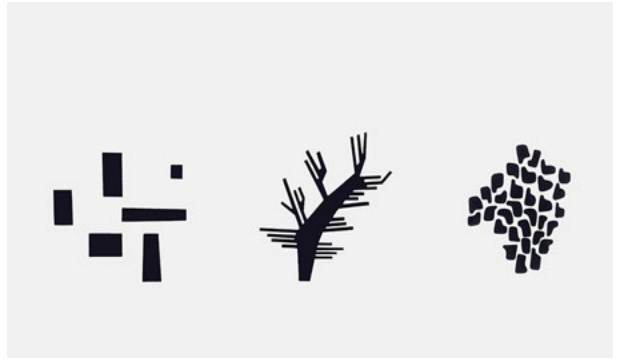
Team X meeting, Bagnols-sur-Cèze, France, 1960



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



Shinjuku terminal redevelopment project, 1960



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

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

So in your buildings, and especially in your crematorium Kaze-no-Oka, you were working with modern architecture as well as the history and interpretations of Japanese principles of space?

Yes. Cremations have a long history over many centuries in Japan. When somebody dies, the body is taken to a crematorium where certain rituals take place. Today a crematorium still offers these rituals and traditions developed within Japanese history.

How did you deal with that? Can you describe important elements of your design for the crematorium?

Since the city owned a large plot of land outside the center, we had the chance to make most of the area a park and placed the crematorium within it like a group of sculptures. You do not see a major building in front of you; instead you follow a path and discover the place in the process. Inside the crematorium, certain places and rituals are very important, as I mentioned. It is fundamental for the visitor to have a sense of the specific place and of time.

When you enter the crematorium you see the open forecourt. The naturally lit space looks very quiet.

From here there is a long corridor that helps people experience the passage of time—not just a door to open and step through. Entering such a building should, I think, be designed as a process, which is quite important in Japanese culture. For this reason, we intentionally created a long path.

In the entry porch, you face a special column illuminated by natural light in order to lend it a sense of lightness. The materials are very primordial: exposed concrete



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



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

and stone, that's all. Another important element in the room is the screen. It is not a door, it is only a screen offering a hint of the next space. This is very important. In Japan the *shoji* screen is made of paper; it gives a place a different quality of light and affords a vague view of the adjacent space. We always like to have this kind of ambiguous condition instead of a clear "yes" or "no" or "open" or "closed."

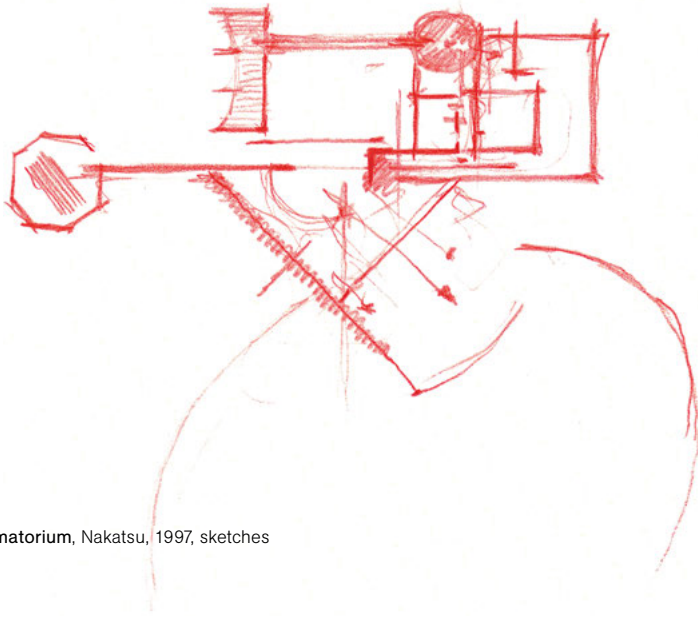
In the crematory space, where you bid your final farewells to the deceased, there is an open court filled with water. Only water and sky. That's all. It is very simple, but with a certain differentiation of natural light. When the cremation is over, the ashes and bones are taken in boxes to the enshrinement room where people share the bones and ashes. Here we brought light in from above because this ritual should be celebrated. Consequently the space is lighter and brighter. It is a modern building, but it refers to rituals and architectural principles with Japanese tradition.

When you were designing the crematorium, how did you work?

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

For the crematorium you also worked with principles from Japanese tradition. Is there a different way of designing a building in Japan than, for example, a building in India, the United States or in Lebanon?

We try to produce something specific to each country, and certainly the purpose is to make a good building. The approach may be different, but in the end, the public and society determines how good the quality of the architecture is. We try not to do the same thing everywhere. For instance, for the "Bihar Museum" in Patna, India, there was a competition. A children's museum was part of the program, and I chose to make it a very distinctive children's place. I am always interested in sequences of spaces and experiences, so in my design the children have a museum of their



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

own, with its own ambience, place, character that is distinct from that of the major gallery. I conceived it more as a campus—and I won the competition.

While the way we design is not so different, the differences between designing in Japan, America or India certainly becomes very evident: The design and the early stages of planning are always done in Tokyo, whether we are doing a building in Lebanon or England. In that respect there is no difference. But as a project gets into the detailed stages, different laws and architectural conditions apply. We have designed many buildings abroad and we always learn what we can do. It is a learning process.

Do you think the process of learning from different countries and cultures as well as the exchanges in international architecture are different today than in the 1960s?

I think that until the 1970s, we architects from all over the world had different design approaches and architectural philosophies, but there was still some kind of commonality shared among more or less the same generation of architects, which led to the formation of groups. That does not exist any more.

When I was young, I had more time for travelling. When I was supposed to go to one place, I could stay on a few more days to visit other places or meet someone for longer. Today, that has become almost impossible—we fly somewhere, then fly back the next day to catch another meeting. Lifestyles have changed and it is a different kind of culture now. Some people—young people—might meet at conferences or workshops, but these meetings do not lead to the formation of a group that could produce a kind of a manifesto. Not any more.

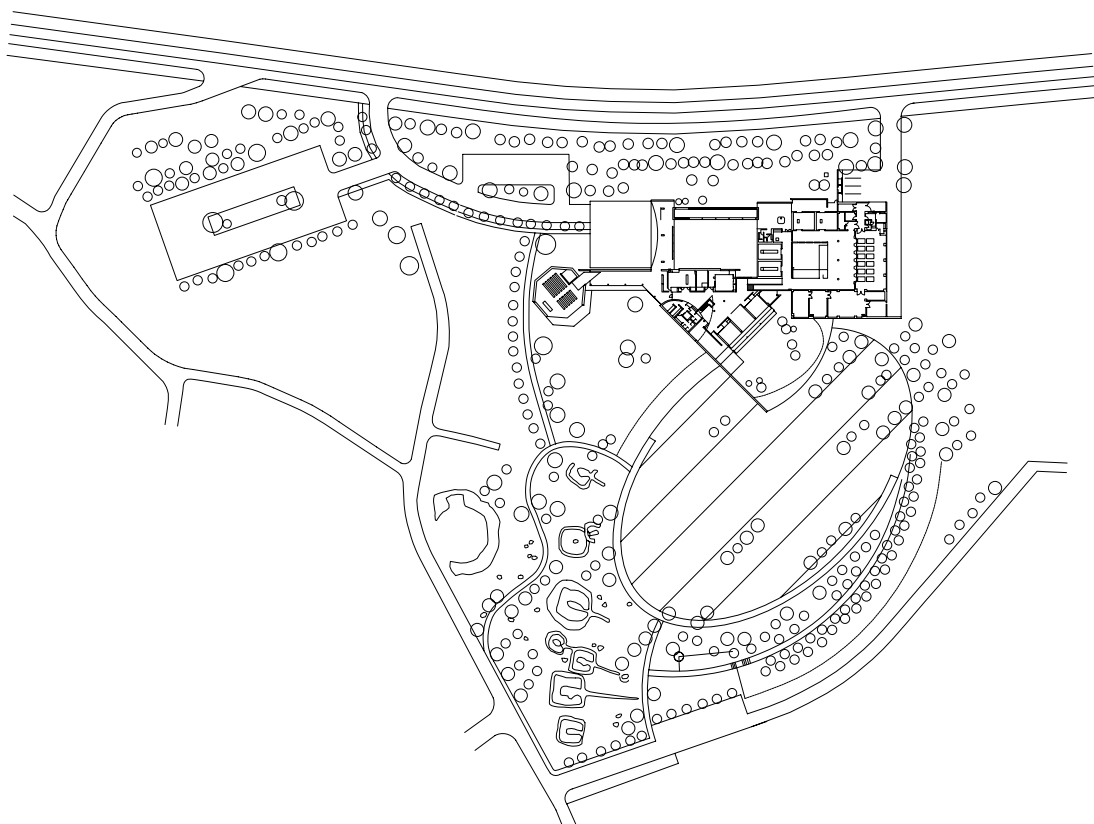
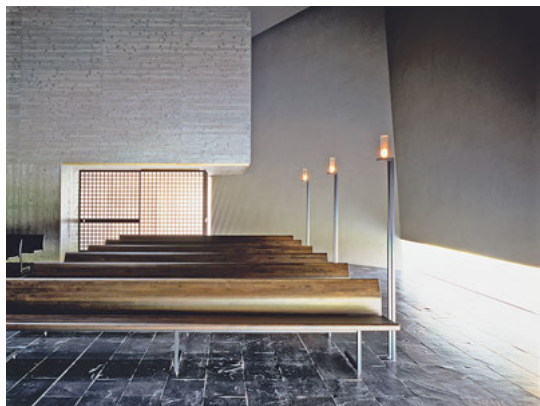




Kaze-no-Oka crematorium



Kaze-no-Oka crematorium



Site plan



The Bihar Museum, Patna, Bihar, India, 2015

Maybe it is no longer the time for manifestos. To come back to the Metabolist manifesto, can you still see influences from the Metabolist movement today?

I'm not sure. Metabolism was a phenomenon during a particular period. Today, there is still interest in Metabolism as a historical movement, as a certain architectural period. We are approached quite often by people who would like to write their Ph.D. thesis on Metabolism, but that is all. That said, I am still optimistic: as much as I enjoyed the good old days, there also has to be new days.

FUMIHIKO MAKI

Biography

- 1928 Born in Tokyo
- 1952 Bachelor of Architecture, University of Tokyo
- 1953 Master of Architecture, Cranbrook Academy of Art, Bloomfield Hills, United States
- 1954 Master of Architecture, Graduate School of Design, Harvard University, United States
- 1955–58 Employee at Sert, Jackson and Associates, Cambridge, United States
- 1956–61 Associate Professor, Washington University, United States
- 1958–60 Graham Foundation fellow, Journeys to Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Europe
- 1962–65 Associate Professor, Graduate School of Design, Harvard University, United States
- 1965 Established Maki and Associates, Tokyo
- 1965–85 Visiting Critic at universities in the United States and Europe
- 1979–89 Professor, Department of Architecture, University of Tokyo
- 1993 Awarded Pritzker Prize

Principal Works

- 1960 Toyota Memorial Hall, Nagoya University, Nagoya
- 1969–92 Hillside Terrace Complex I–VI, Tokyo
- 1972 PREVI project, with Kionori Kikutake and Kisho Kurokawa, Lima, Peru
- St. Mary's International School, Tokyo
- 1973 Embassy of Japan, Brazilia, Brazil
- 1974 Toyota Kuragaike Memorial Hall, Toyota
- 1985 Keio University Library, Mita Campus, Tokyo
- Spiral Building, Tokyo
- 1990 Tokyo Metropolitan Gymnasium, Tokyo
- 1995 Tokyo Church of Christ, Tokyo
- Isar Büropark, One World, Munich, Germany
- 1997 Kaze-no-Oka crematorium, Nakatsu
- 2009 Square 3 Novartis Campus, Basel, Switzerland
- 2013 4 World Trade Center, New York, United States
- 2014 Aga Khan Museum, Ontario, Canada
- 2015 Bihar Museum, Patna, Bihar, India

Publications—Selection

- 1960 With Masato Otaka: "Towards the Group Form," in: Noboru Kawazoe (ed.), *Metabolism 1960: Proposals for a New Urbanism*, Bijutsu Shuppansha, Tokyo
- 1964 *Investigations in Collective Form* (as editor), School of Architecture, Washington University, St. Louis
- 1965 *Movement Systems in the City*, Graduate School of Design, Harvard University, Cambridge
- 1980 *Miegakure suru toshi* (Morphological analysis of Edo-Tokyo), Kajima Shuppankai, Tokyo
- 2008 *Nurturing Dreams: Collected Essays on Architecture and the City*, MIT Press, Cambridge

