



Yale University, School of Architecture

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Wall: The Time's Building, 1984: On the Takasegawa River, Kyoto, Japan

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*Wall: The Time's Building, 1984*

On the Takasegawa River, Kyoto, Japan

*Tadao Ando*



*1. Entry plaza from the Sanjo-Kobashi bridge.*

At times walls manifest a power that borders on the violent. They have the power to divide space, transfigure place, and create new domains. Walls are the most basic elements of architecture, but they can also be the most enriching.

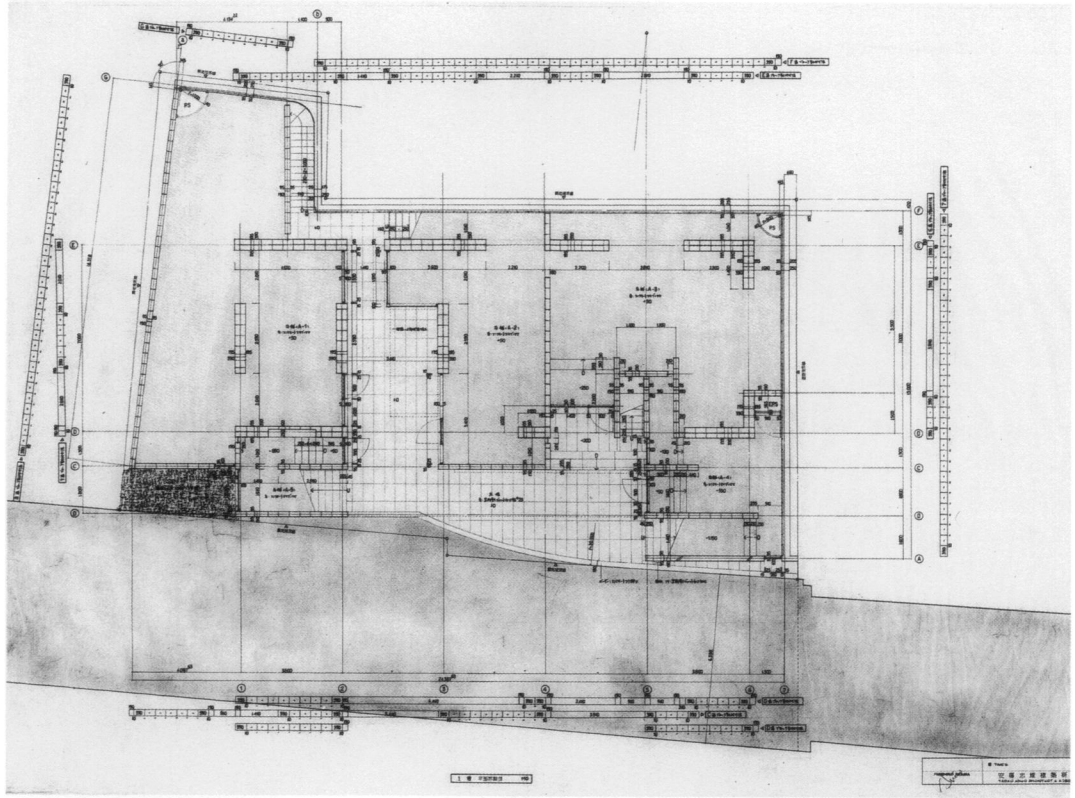
Historically, walls have had negative associations for many people. The enclosing boundary of a penitentiary immediately comes to mind when one thinks of walls, and they are often perceived as devices that physically and psychologically separate the inside from the outside. Walls are heedless of the inmate's longing to be outside and forcibly keep him in. To the outside world, the walls of the penitentiary proclaim that the place is for those who are to be shunned. Walls are symbols of separation and have been regarded as a means of closure. Having been relegated to such roles, they have quite naturally been used only to cut off space.

To reject what is to be abhorred and to accept only that which is desirable – these actions are very much a part of man's most basic behavior, that of habitation. It is a central concern of habitation to keep out the external world and to protect the world inside, to accept and assimilate only those aspects of the outside world that promote the maintenance of the inner realm. In other words, habitation depends on the skillful manipulation of rejection and acceptance.

There is generally less tension in the act of acceptance than there is in rejection. To accept is to affirm and with this one tends to put down one's guard. However, if everything is allowed to penetrate into the interior, the internal world disintegrates and its centrality collapses. This results when there is an absence of tension in the act of acceptance. I believe therefore that tension should be as present in acceptance as in rejection. In architecture this tension signifies an intense confrontation between the inside and the outside. Thus, those places where the internal order meets the external order, that is, the areas of fenestration in a building, are of extreme importance.

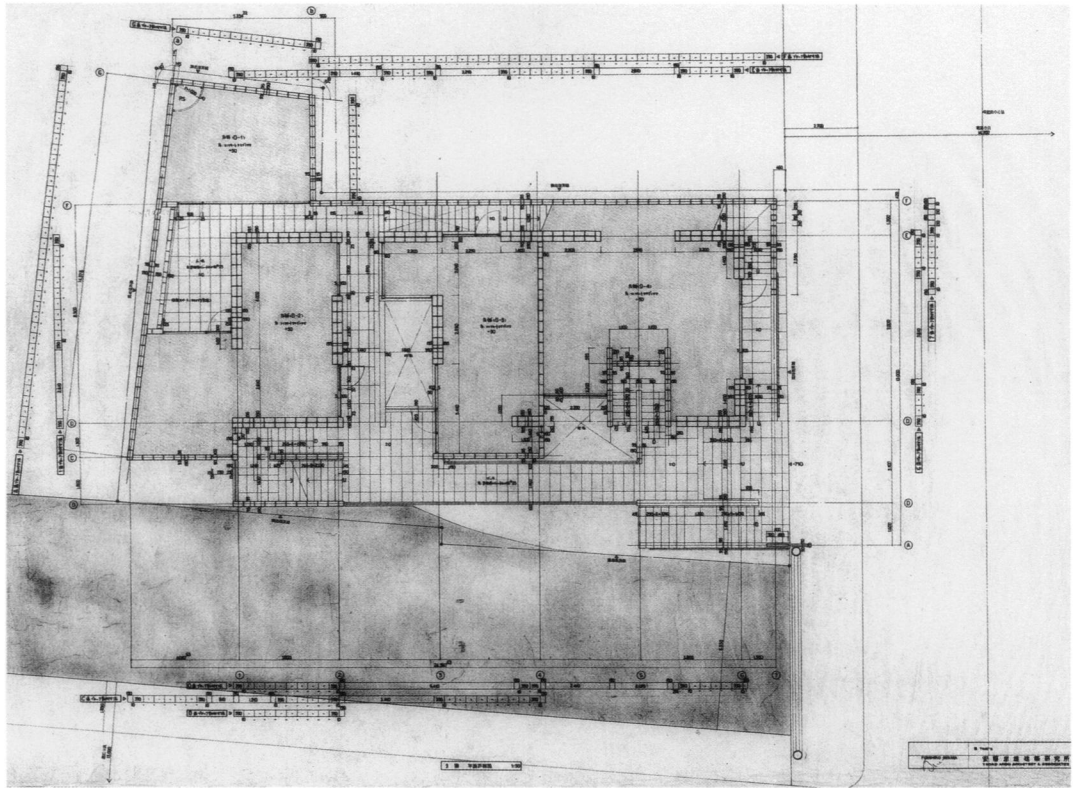
In my buildings, walls play a dual role, serving both to reject and affirm. By positioning a number of walls at certain intervals, I create openings. Walls are freed from the simple role of closure and are given a new objective. They are calculated to accept even as they reject. The amorphous and immaterial elements of wind, sunlight, sky, and landscape are cut out and appropriated by walls which serve as agents of the internal world. These elements are assimilated as aspects of the architectural space. This tense relationship between inside and outside is based on the act of cutting (as with a sword), which to the Japanese is not cruel and destructive but is instead sacred; it is a ceremonial act symbolizing a new disclosure. To the Japanese this act has become an end in itself. It provides a spiritual focus both in space and time. In that tense moment, an object loses its definition and its individual and basic character becomes manifest. Walls "cut" into sky, sunlight, wind, and landscape at every instant, and the architecture reverberates to this continual demonstration of power.

The more austere the wall, even to the point of being cold, the more it speaks to us. At times it is a sharp weapon menacing us. At times it is a mirror in which landscape and sunlight are dimly reflected. Light that diffuses around a corner and gathers in the general darkness contrasts strongly with direct light. With the passage of time these two "lights" blend and enrich the space. Man and nature, mediated by architecture, meet.

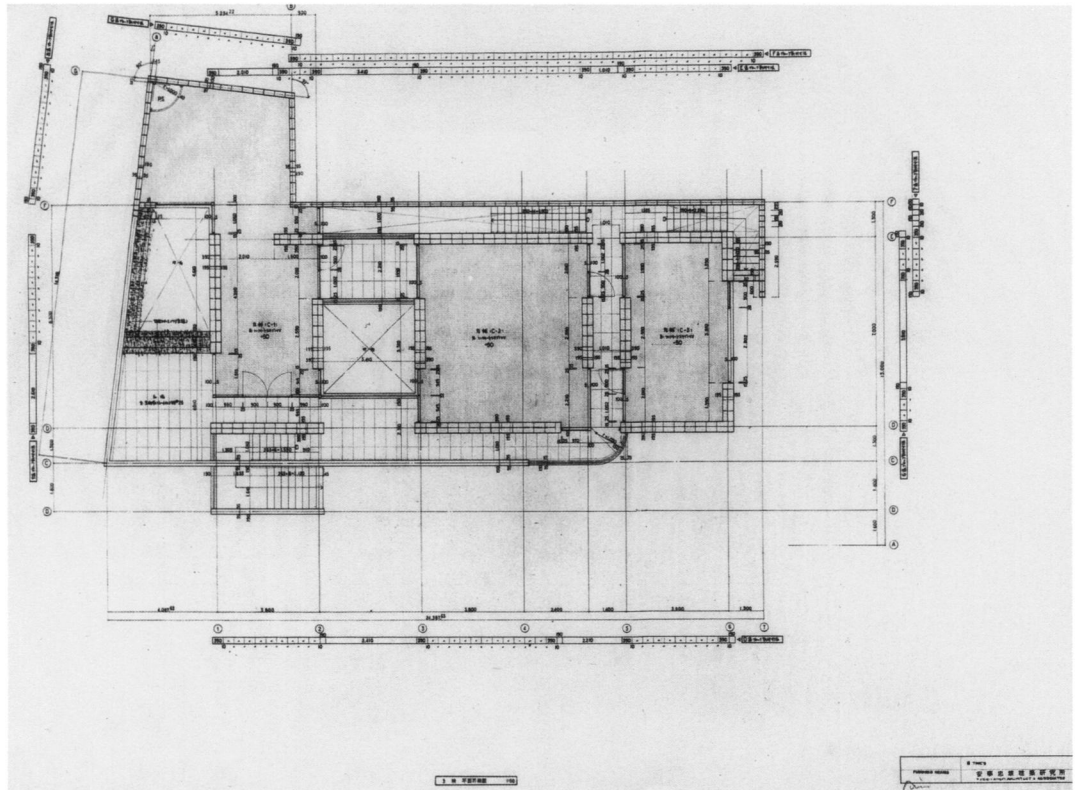


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2. First floor plan.



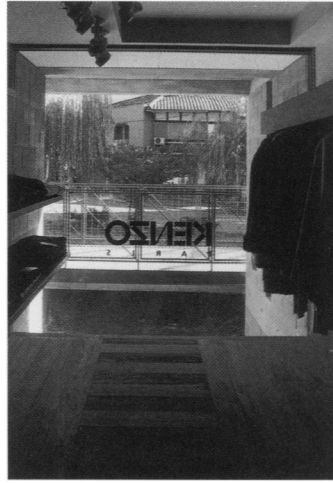
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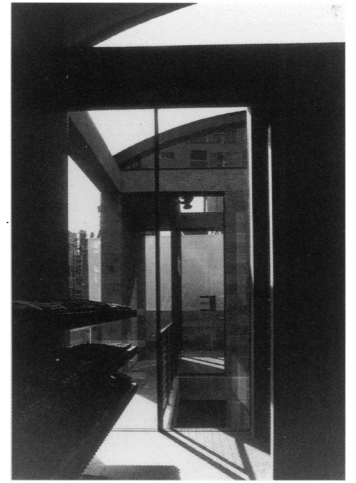
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3. Second floor plan.

4. Third floor plan.



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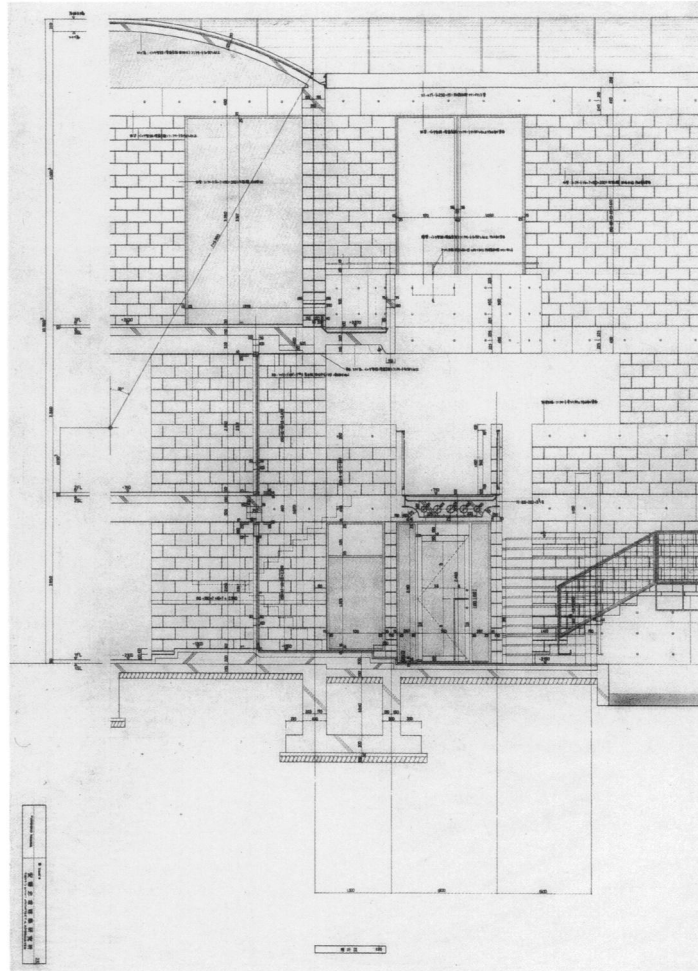


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*5. Shop window at second floor with steel walkway beyond.*

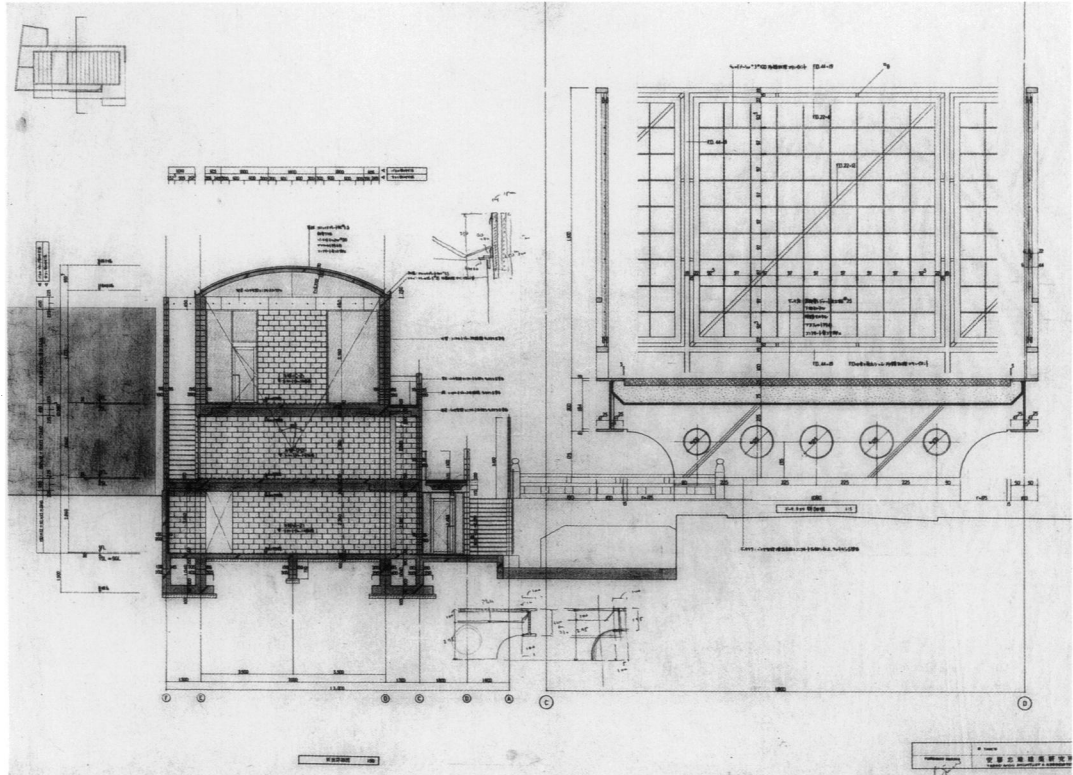
*6. Interior court at third floor shops.*

*7. Interior court at second floor shops.*



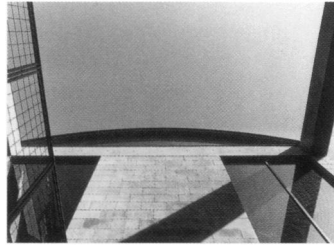
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8. Composite detail section/elevation  
at entry plaza.

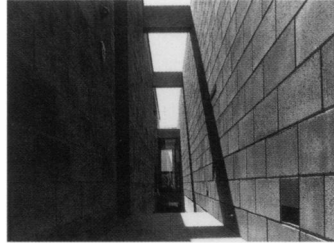


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9. West/east building section with detail of steel walkway.



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11



12

10. *Interior court at third floor shops.*

11. *Passageway at third floor.*

12. *View to the south.*