

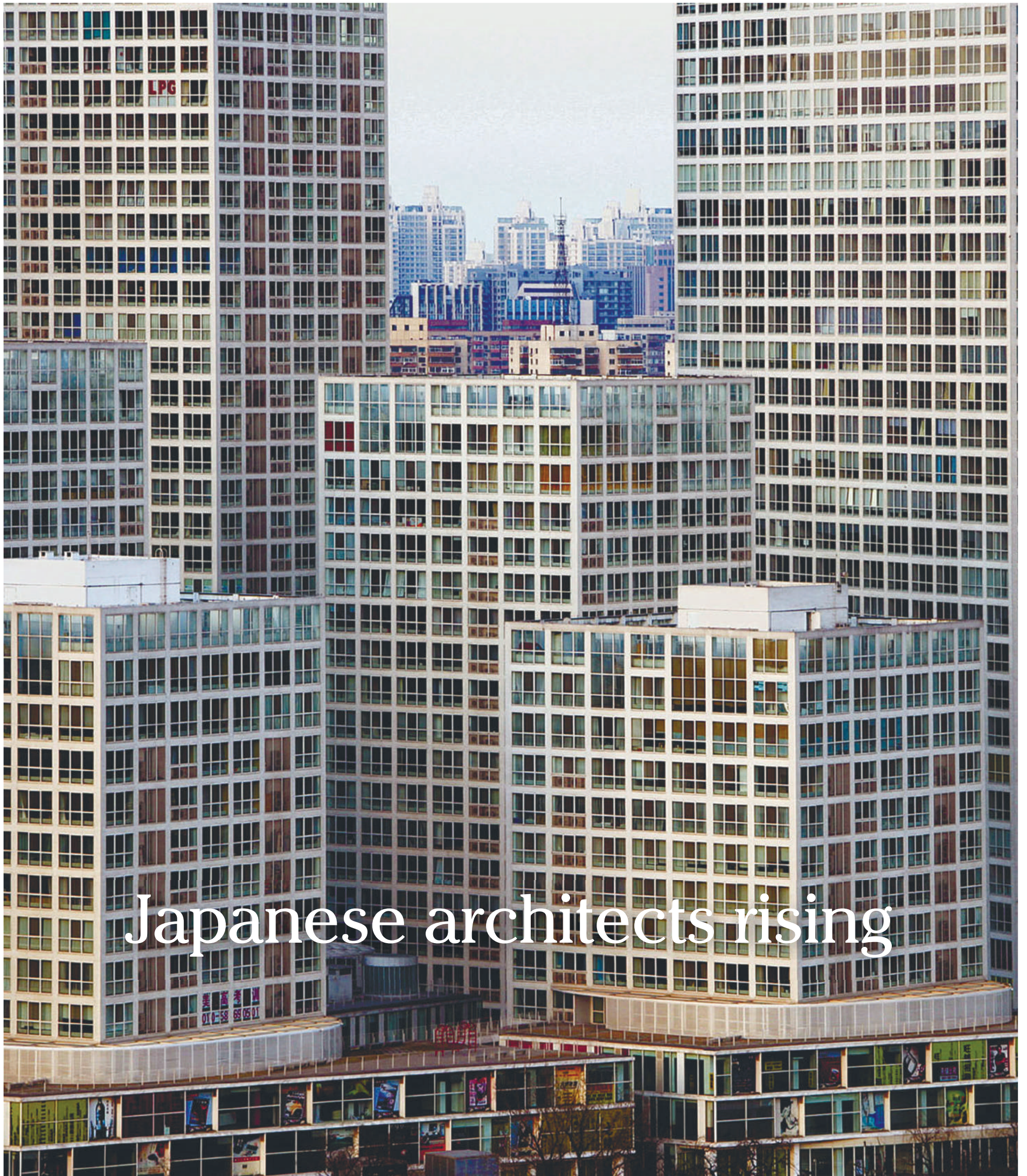
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SUSTAINABLE JAPAN MAGAZINE

Saturday, November 30, 2024



Japanese architects rising

FROM THE EDITOR

By YOSHIKUNI SHIRAI / EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

While the achievements of Major League Baseball player Shohei Otani or Japanese directors at overseas film festivals quickly garner attention in Japan, the international accolades accorded to the nation's architects don't generate as many headlines for some reason. This year, architect Riken Yamamoto became the ninth Japanese to win the Pritzker Architecture Prize, the "Nobel Prize of archi-

ecture," and Japan now stands tied with the United States for the most laureates. The first Japanese recipient was Kenzo Tange in 1987, followed by Fumihiko Maki (1993), Tadao Ando (1995), Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa (2010), Toyo Ito (2013), Shigeru Ban (2014), Arata Isozaki (2019) and now Yamamoto. Why have so many Japanese been recognized in this way?

At the end of the Edo Period

(1603–1868), Japan broke its long national isolation and sought to become a nation on par with Western powers. The approach it adopted ultimately culminated in defeat in World War II. Then, from the burned ruins, Japan rebuilt its cities and towns, spurring significant progress in architecture and building techniques. In this special issue, we explore the activities and the acclaim of Japan's architects.

アメリカ・大リーグでの大谷翔平の活躍や、海外の映画祭などで日本人監督や作品が受賞すると日本国内で話題になりますが、建築家の活躍に至っては、あまり日本人は関心が無いように見えます。そのようななか今年2024年、建築界のノーベル賞と言われる「プリツカー建築賞」を建築家・山本理顕氏が受賞し、国別で見ると、日本はアメリカと並び8組9名と世界最多受賞国となりました。1987年の丹下健三の受賞を皮切りに、横文

彦 (1993年)、安藤忠雄 (1995年)、妹島和世、西沢立衛 (2010年)、伊東豊雄 (2013年)、坂茂 (2014年)、磯崎新 (2019年)、そして山本理顕 (2024年) と続きます。一体なぜ、日本人建築家がこのように評価されるのでしょうか？

日本は明治時代に欧米列強と並ぶ新しい国づくりを目指しましたが第二次大戦で敗戦し、焼け野原から街を再興させてきました。この過程で培われてきたのが建築思想や技術です。今回は日本の建築家の魅力に迫ります。



RIKEN YAMAMOTO

Born in Beijing in 1945. He is an architect and the founder of the company Riken Yamamoto & Field Shop. He graduated from Nihon University's Department of Architecture in 1968 and received a master of arts degree in architecture from Tokyo University of the Arts in 1971. He was a research student at the Hara Laboratory at the University of Tokyo's Institute of Industrial Science. He was appointed as a visiting professor at Kanagawa University in 2024. He holds the titles of professor emeritus and honorary doctor from Yokohama National University and honorary professor and honorary doctor of engineering from Nihon University. He was a visiting professor at Tokyo University of the Arts from 2022 to 2024 and previously taught at Yokohama National University's Graduate School of Architecture from 2007 to 2011 and served as the president of Nagoya Zokei University of Art and Design from 2018 to 2022. Some of his notable works include Nagoya Zokei's new campus, The Circle at Zurich Airport, the Yokosuka Museum of Art, the campuses of Future University Hakodate and Saitama Prefectural University, and his own house, Gazebo. He has also undertaken projects for mixed-use facilities, public buildings and residential complexes in China, South Korea and Taiwan.



The Pritzker Architecture Prize medal with Yamamoto's name inscribed.

PHOTO: YOSHIKI TSUTSUI

Feature JAPANESE ARCHITECTS

INTERVIEW

Riken Yamamoto explores spaces that foster community

By MINAMI NAKAWADA



Riken Yamamoto at his office in Yokohama. Designed by Yamamoto, the building has a semi-basement where models are made.

PHOTO: YOSHIKI TSUTSUI

● Summary

山本理顕が考える「建築を通じたコミュニティの創出」とは。

建築界のノーベル賞と呼ばれる賞がある。それが「プリツカー建築賞」だ。賞の創設は1979年。今年2024年は建築家の山本理顕がその栄光に輝いた。これで日本人建築家の受賞は8組9名となり、アメリカと並び、世界最多受賞国となった。山本理顕のプリツカー建築賞受賞は建築界を驚かせた。派手な建築を作るスター建築家が受賞

するものという先入観が一般にあったからかもしれない。しかし山本が一貫して訴え、作品を通じ追及してきたのは「建築を通じたコミュニティの創出」。プリツカー賞の審査員から高く評価されたのもその点にあった。「受賞の知らせに私自身も驚きましたが、審査委員長がこの賞の受賞者でもあるチリ人建築家アレハンドロ・ア

ラヴェナさんは、チリで貧困に苦しむ人たちのための住宅プロジェクトを行うなど社会的な活動に取り組む建築家です。また審査員には外交官など建築家以外の方もいます。そのため「建築の社会性」に対し強い意識を持っていると思います。そういったことが私の受賞につながったのではないかと思います。



日本語全文はこちらから



Hiroshima Nishi Fire Station (2000). The building has a glass exterior, which is rare for a fire station and means the firefighters' training can be viewed from the outside.



PHOTO: TOMIO OHASHI / VIA THE PRITZKER ARCHITECTURE PRIZE

Among the many international awards for architecture, only one is known as the field's "Nobel Prize": the Pritzker Architecture Prize, established in 1979 and sponsored by the Hyatt Foundation in the United States.

The award is given each year, usually to just one architect, in recognition of "consistent and significant contributions to humanity and the built environment through the art of architecture."

The winner of the 2024 award was named on March 7: the relatively obscure Riken Yamamoto. This brought the number of Japanese laureates to nine, two of whom shared the prize, making Japan tied with the U.S. as the countries with the most recipients.

Japan was once a nation of temples, shrines and castles, and as a result it developed excellent techniques in wooden construction and civil engineering. However, as the Edo Period (1603-1868) gave way to the Meiji Era (1868-1912), the construction of a modern nation became an urgent task, and the country looked to the West for guidance. In the field of architecture, the government invited the 25-year-old Briton Josiah Conder and he began teaching at the University of Tokyo's College of Engineering (now the Faculty of Engineering) in 1877. In the ensuing 150 years, Japanese architects have earned a reputation as some of the best in the world.

The news that Yamamoto had won was greeted with some surprise in the architectural community, perhaps because many thought the prize only went to star architects who create flashy buildings. Yamamoto's focus has always been on the creation of community through architecture — and it turned out that this very point was what impressed the jury.

"It was in mid-January that I was told by juror and prize Executive Director Manuela Luca-Dazio that I had won. I was surprised myself, but when I saw the nine members of the jury, I understood. The jury president, Anejandro Aravena, himself a laureate, has been closely involved in social movements, including a housing project for the poor in Chile. The jury also included diplomats and other nonarchitects. So I think they were strongly conscious of the social aspects of architecture, and that was what led to their decision," Yamamoto explained.

Looking back at the previous laureates, it is clear that creators of highly artistic buildings did tend to win up until around the early 2000s. But from around the time of the Lehman shock in 2008 onward, more community-conscious architects started getting recognition. This was especially true with Aravena, who won in 2013, and also with the two Japanese who won in 2013 and 2014, Toyo Ito and Shigeru Ban.

"At the time of the Great East Japan

Earthquake in 2011, Ito asked himself what architects could do for the victims," Yamamoto said. "His answer was the community spaces dubbed Minna no Ie (Homes for All) that were later built in several of the affected areas. Ban too has worked for war refugees and victims of natural disasters, starting with his paper church in the aftermath of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake in 1996 and the shelters he provided for Rwandan refugees in 1999. I think the jury pays attention not only to the architecture itself but also to those social aspects."

So, what does Yamamoto mean when he says he wants to create community through architecture? Let's look at his Hiroshima Nishi Fire Station (2000) as an example. Fire stations are usually solidly constructed of concrete, giving them a closed and impenetrable impression, but this one was characterized by its transparent glass walls that allowed people to see inside. Yamamoto says the effect of this transparency was to motivate the firefighters and also to reassure citizens that they are protected. "Firefighters don't just go out when there is a disaster. The daily fire drills at the stations and practical training at the emergency centers are also part of community activities. By showing people these activities, we can raise awareness of disaster prevention in the community and foster stronger ties," he said.

In discussing his Koyasu Elementary School in Yokohama (2018), which has more than 1,000 students, Yamamoto first pointed out that the sheer number of students made it difficult for a true community to form. He gave each classroom glass walls, so as not to make them closed off, and also created 4-meter-wide terraces

overlooking the central playground, where students could grow plants and engage in other activities in the open. Yamamoto said: "We wanted architecture that would hint at some answers to the bigger question of what the future of education should look like. During athletic festivals, 2,000 parents gather on the terraces to watch the 1,000 kids compete. The terraces become a grandstand, and the entire school building, including the grounds, is like a giant outdoor theater. The students, teachers and parents all seemed really happy with it."

Yamamoto has also launched an organization called Local Area Republic Labo to explore the nature of community in modern societies. He said a "local area republic" is a small self-governing body of 500 to 1,000 people — in simple terms, a neighborhood association. Until the end of the Edo Period, self-government in Japan was really conducted by small neighborhood associations. Over time, however, this sense of community has become less and less important, overtaken by the larger society that is the nation. Yamamoto is searching for ways to recreate lifestyles centered around small communities and exploring how architecture can foster that.

His way of thinking is catching on. He says he now receives requests for lectures and consultation from all over the world. Two days after our interview, he was heading off to Venezuela, and already this year he had been invited to Guatemala, Serbia, Indonesia, the Philippines and other countries with activist communities. It seems that high hopes are held globally for this acclaimed architect and his innovative ideas about communities.



Koyasu Elementary School in Yokohama (2018). During athletic festivals, parents can cheer on the children from the terraces, with the entire school functioning as a large outdoor theater.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MITSUMASA FUJITSUKA / VIA THE PRITZKER ARCHITECTURE PRIZE

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COVER PHOTO

Jian Wai SOHO, a residential complex in Beijing, was designed by architect Riken Yamamoto. The many towers appear homogeneous at first glance, but the lower levels, decks and streets are skillfully arranged to create rich public spaces. The residences are also designed to accommodate working from home.

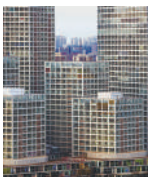


PHOTO: RIKEN YAMAMOTO & FIELD SHOP / VIA THE PRITZKER ARCHITECTURE PRIZE

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Feature JAPANESE ARCHITECTS

JAPANESE PRITZKER LAUREATES

What's behind Japanese architects' success?

By TOSHICHIKA IZUMI

1987



PHOTO: KOICHI SAITO

Kenzo Tange
(1913-2005)

Perhaps the first Japanese architect to really achieve international acclaim was Kenzo Tange — and the project that put him on the map was the Hiroshima Peace Center.

Starting with the Hiroshima Peace Center (1955), completed just 10 years after the atomic bombing, Tange was involved in all aspects of the project, from the overall master plan to the Memorial Cenotaph. He was particularly praised for retaining the A-Bomb Dome, which some people had wanted demolished, on the same axis as the cenotaph and preserving it as a symbol of peace for future generations.

Later he played central roles in the 1964 Tokyo Olympics and Expo '70 in Osaka, major events that came to symbolize Japan's rapid postwar growth. For the Olympics, he designed the Yoyogi National Stadium, and for Expo '70 he worked on the overall master plan.

His major works include the Kagawa Prefectural Government Hall (1958) and the Tokyo Metropolitan Government Building (1990), as well as many overseas projects like the Kuwait International Airport (1979) and the Royal State Palace in Saudi Arabia (1982). He has also worked globally as an urban planner, notably in Bologna and Naples in Italy.

Hiroshima Peace Center
(Completed in 1955)

A competition was held in 1949, and Tange's winning plan proposed three buildings in a row. At first, only the main building in the center (below) and the one to the east (on the right when facing the Memorial Cenotaph) were realized. In 1989, the International Conference Center Hiroshima was built on the western side, with Tange drawing on his original plan for the design.



PHOTO: KOUTAROU WASHIZAKI

1993



PHOTO: PETER HYATT

Fumihiko Maki
(1928-2024)

Fumihiko Maki studied under Kenzo Tange at the Tange Laboratory at the University of Tokyo. He then continued his studies at Harvard University's Graduate School of Design before working at an American firm.

One of the most notable aspects of his design philosophy is what he referred to as "group form." This was one of the main precepts of "metabolism," a movement that had emerged out of the World Design Conference in Japan in 1960 and which sought to connect architecture with organic biological systems.

The idea was inspired by residences Maki had seen in the Middle East and the Mediterranean in his early 30s. Those residences had been built by freely combining simple regular forms over the top of complex topography, so that over a long period of time they came together to form an attractive whole (a "group form"). This approach led to the design of his masterpiece, Daikanyama Hillside Terrace in Tokyo. This group of buildings was built over 20 years, from the first phase in 1969 to the sixth in 1992, with each carefully designed to match the scale of the surrounding town.

4 World Trade Center
(Completed in 2013)

This was the first skyscraper completed on the site of New York City's World Trade Center, which collapsed in the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001. In accordance with architect Daniel Libeskind's master plan, it is one of five buildings arranged around the National September 11 Memorial & Museum.

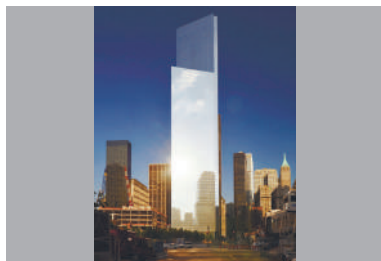


PHOTO: TECTONIC PHOTO

1995



PHOTO: KINJI KANNO

Tadao Ando
(1941-)

One of Tadao Ando's major achievements was establishing concrete not just as a ubiquitous and versatile construction material, but also as an object of beauty, like marble. Through his clever introduction of natural light, he manages to give his concrete structures, including even residential blocks, a temple-like air of dignity and beauty.

Many of his clients have become smitten with both his personality and his craft, choosing to work with him on multiple projects over decades. For example, his work with Benesse's Soichiro Fukutake at the Naoshima art island in the Seto Inland Sea began with Benesse House Museum in 1992 and continues more than 30 years later, with a new museum scheduled to open next year. Overseas, he is known for his collaborations with Francois Pinault of the Kering Group. Their work together includes an unfinished museum project on Ile Seguin in Paris (2001), the Palazzo Grassi (2006) and the Punta della Dogana (2009) in Venice, and also the Bourse de Commerce in Paris (2021).

Naoshima New Museum (tentative name)
(Scheduled to open in 2025)

This new art museum is due to open in the spring of 2025, the latest addition to the renowned arts destination Benesse Art Site Naoshima. The 10th facility created by Ando on Naoshima, it will have one floor above ground and two below, and will include a cafe.



© TADAO ANDO ARCHITECT & ASSOCIATES

2010



© SANAA

Kazuyo Sejima
(1956-)
Ryue Nishizawa
(1966-)

While Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa maintain independent practices, they also work together as the design firm SANAA (which stands for Sejima and Nishizawa and Associates). Their architecture is characterized by its lightness and transparency. Their exteriors, often using glass and aluminum, reflect and sometimes blend in with the surrounding landscape, erasing the material presence of the architecture.

Their work is also characterized by a freedom of spirit and a disregard for convention that have delighted the architecture fraternity. A good example is the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa (2004). While traditional museum architecture tends to be symmetrical and imposing, with a central entrance at the front of the building, SANAA's low-rise circular building with four entrances is freely accessible from any direction. This "democratic architecture" won them the Golden Lion at the Venice Biennale of Architecture in 2004.

21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa
(Opened in 2004)

This art museum is located in the center of the city of Kanazawa. The large circular building encloses exhibition rooms, a theater, cafe, library and other facilities — some accessible for free. Many of the exterior and interior walls are made of glass, creating bright and open spaces.



© 2024 21ST CENTURY MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, KANAZAWA

In 2024, architect Riken Yamamoto won the Pritzker Architecture Prize, the “Nobel Prize” of his profession, giving Japan a total of eight laureates, equal in number to the United States. It is reasonable to ask why so many Japanese architects have won the award, from Kenzo Tange in 1987 to Yamamoto this year. Here we look back on their careers and achievements.

● Summary 日本人建築家9名が、世界から評価された理由。

今年2024年に建築家・山本理顕が“建築界のノーベル賞”と言われる「プリツカー建築賞」を受賞したことで、日本はアメリカと並び8組が受賞し、同賞の世界最多受賞国となった。では一体、なぜ日本人の建築家は高い評価を得たのか？ 1987年受賞の丹下健三から今年2024年受賞の山本理顕まで、日本人受賞建築家の経歴を紹介すると共に、その功績に迫りたい。

そのようななか、国際的に活躍した日本人建築家の第一号が丹下健三である。その丹下が世界から最初に注目されたプロジェクトが、広島ピースセンター計

画だ。原爆の投下から10年後に完成した広島市の平和記念公園の設計をはじめ、計画のマスタープランから慰霊碑までを手掛けた。なかでも当時取壊しの議論のあった「原爆ドーム」を慰霊の軸線上に置き、平和を祈念するシンボルとし全体計画の中に取り入れ、後世にこの建物を残したことが、高く評価されている。その後、日本の高度成長期を象徴する大イベント、1964年の東京五輪、1970年大阪万博でも中心的な役割を担った。



日本語全文はこちらから

2013



PHOTO: MITSUMASA FUJITSUKA

Toyo Ito
(1941-)

With his designs for Sendai Mediatheque (2001) and Taichung Metropolitan Opera House (2016), Toyo Ito has long been at the forefront of his profession, particularly for his design methods and his exploration of the relationship between structure and design. He is also known for nurturing other prominent architects, including Kazuyo Sejima.

The Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011 was a watershed moment for his architecture and his way of thinking. He immediately rallied his fellow architects to travel to the disaster areas and eventually built a series of “Homes for All” community spaces for disaster victims. In 2012, as the commissioner of the Japan Pavilion at the Venice Biennale of Architecture, he showcased one of these projects and won the Golden Lion for a country pavilion. It was his second time to win the coveted award, having also received it as an individual in 2002.

National Taichung Theater
(Opened in 2016)

This opera house in Taichung, Taiwan, is characterized by an organic exterior that almost resembles a living creature. With large curved walls comprising the majority of the structure, the interior is filled with cave-like spaces of various sizes.



COURTESY: TOYO ITO ASSOCIATES, ARCHITECTS

2014



COURTESY: SHIGERU BAN ARCHITECTS

Shigeru Ban
(1957-)

Having won the international competition to design the Centre Pompidou Metz (2010), a regional branch of the Pompidou arts center in France, Shigeru Ban’s buildings have garnered plaudits around the world. And yet perhaps the most significant aspect of his practice is the humanitarian aid he provides to victims of conflicts and natural disasters.

Ban’s humanitarian work began in 1994 when he designed a shelter for Rwandan refugees. Having proposed a new shelter design to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, he was hired as a consultant and eventually constructed the shelters using cardboard tubes made of recycled paper and plastic sheets. At the time, the U.N.’s shelters were just plastic sheets, meaning the refugees had to cut down trees to make frames, thereby depleting their natural environments. Since Ban established the Voluntary Architects’ Network in 1995, he has supported people in both Japan and around the world suffering the effects of hurricanes, earthquakes and, recently, the Ukraine war.

Cardboard Cathedral
(Completed in 2013)

This is a cathedral in Christchurch, New Zealand, built after the original was damaged in the Christchurch earthquake of February 2011. Built using 196 paper tubes and laminated veneer lumber produced at a local factory, the large internal space can accommodate 700 people.



PHOTO: STEPHEN GOODENOUGH

2019



COURTESY: ARATA ISOZAKI & ASSOCIATES

Arata Isozaki
(1931-2022)

Arata Isozaki is perhaps the architect who has continued to exert the greatest influence on contemporary architecture for the longest time. After studying at the Tange Laboratory and then opening his own office, he went on to produce works of architecture not just in Japan but in the U.S., Spain, China and many other countries too numerous to name. But perhaps even more significantly, he has contributed to international architectural discourse through his involvement in international competition juries, major conferences and large-scale development projects. His actions have unearthed the next generation of architects, while his writings and speeches have consistently stimulated the fraternity.

Well versed in philosophy, history, art and many other fields, he has applied his considerable knowledge to his architectural design and planning. His major works include the Museum of Modern Art, Gunma (1974), the Tsukuba Center Building (1983), the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (1988), the Palau Sant Jordi (1990) in Spain and the Qatar National Convention Centre (2011).

Kitakyushu City Central Library
(Completed in 1974)

One the best-known works from Isozaki’s early period, this library is distinguished by its impressive blue-green vaulted roof. The architect has made many other buildings in Kitakyushu, including the Kitakyushu Municipal Museum of Art (1974), the West Japan General Exhibition Center (1977) and the Kitakyushu International Conference Center (1990).



PHOTO: MITSUMASA FUJITSUKA

2024



COURTESY: TOM WELSH / VIA THE PRITZKER ARCHITECTURE PRIZE

Riken Yamamoto
(1945-)

Throughout a career that has produced many standout buildings, Riken Yamamoto has remained true to his stated intention of creating “community through architecture.” This aspect of his work was also singled out in his Pritzker Architecture Prize commendation.

After finishing graduate school, Yamamoto worked under Hiroshi Hara (known for designing Kyoto Station and the Umeda Sky Building) and then traveled around the world to study villages, particularly in North Africa and South America. Influenced not just by the styles of housing but also by the villages and communities he saw during those travels, he has remained focused on the question of how architecture can be made to serve modern society. He has not been afraid to occasionally call out what he has seen as overly commercial housing and urban development projects exhibiting little concern for the public interest.

The “local area republics” for which he advocates are small self-governing units of between 500 and 1,000 people. He has established an organization to promote and research how architecture can play a role in giving small communities a sense of economic independence and self-reliance.

Yokosuka Museum of Art
(Opened in 2007)

The Yokosuka Museum of Art overlooks Tokyo Bay. The exhibition and storage rooms are arranged within a beautiful glass box exterior, the height of which is kept low to harmonize with the landscape. The museum rooftop is a plaza that provides direct access to Kannonzaki Park on the mountain side.



COURTESY: TOMIO OHASHI / VIA THE PRITZKER ARCHITECTURE PRIZE

An evening of pairing sake and a variety of foods

By RIKO SAITO



The "Special Japanese Sake and Food Pairing Program" was held at the Hotel New Otani Tokyo on Oct. 16.

Sake is a world-class beverage that has grown out of Japan's climate, lifestyle, culture and history. To spread the appeal and enjoyment of pairing sake with a wide range of foods overseas, the Japan Sake and Shochu Makers Association hosted the "Special Japanese Sake and Food Pairing Program" at the Hotel New Otani Tokyo on Oct. 16.

The participants included ambassadors, diplomats and staff members from embassies of 40 countries in Japan, as well as experts capable of disseminating information to their home countries, including those from foreign chambers of commerce

and industry, economic organizations and media. The sake-pairing dinner began with an opening address by Naotaka Miyasaka, chairman of the association's overseas sake promotion committee, as everyone enjoyed the welcome drink, Masumi Sparkling Origarami Junmai Ginjo, in a friendly atmosphere.

Next, ambassadors from nine countries broke open three sake casks lined up on the stage in a traditional ceremony of *kagami biraki*. The ambassadors, each wearing a traditional *happi* coat, hammered the wooden lids with mallets, responding to three calls of "Yoisho!" followed by a loud cheer from the participants. In



Ambassador of Finland to Japan Tanja Jaaskelainen (left) made the closing remarks after participants tasted five different sakes paired with a five-course meal. The dinner began after Naotaka Miyasaka, chairman of the Japan Sake and Shochu Makers Association's overseas sake promotion committee, made the opening address.

PHOTOS: THE JAPAN SAKE AND SHOCHU MAKERS ASSOCIATION

that instant, [INE] Denshin Junmai, the first of the event's featured sakes, was poured into glasses of participants. It was paired with nine elaborately prepared Japanese-style appetizers, including ball-shaped salmon *temari-zushi*, dressed shellfish and vegetables and grilled Spanish mackerel seasoned with Saikyo miso. [INE] Denshin Junmai, which has a gentle, smooth flavor, doubles the deliciousness of these appetizers in a magic of pairing. This was a fitting first combination to impress the participants with how well sake and food go together.

Maksim Polkin, a sake educator certified by the Wine & Spirit Education Trust, lectured on the event's five-course meal and the five brands of featured sake that went with them. In addition to key points of pairing sake with food, Polkin discussed everything from the history of sake and how it is made — including rice-polishing ratios and *kōji* mold — to the differences between sake and wine, all in an easy-to-understand manner for sake beginners.

The featured sake that was served second was Hanagaki Junmai Nigori. Surprisingly, it was paired with *tom yam kung*, a Thai soup. Polkin explained how sake's low acidity allows it to be paired with a wide range of dishes and how *nigori* sake goes well with spicy dishes. The combination of the sour, spicy soup and sake offered a novel taste that the partici-

pants enjoyed.

The third featured sake was Shinsei Junmai Daiginjo Matsuno Midori. Going with it was *acqua pazza* richly flavored with *asari* clams and mussels. Sake and seafood are an undisputed great combination. Polkin explained this is because of the enhanced umami resulting from combining sake's glutamic acid and seafood's inosinic acid, to which many nodded in agreement.

Served with the fourth featured sake, Komagura Gen Enjuku Junmai Ginjo, was roasted beef medallions with a Spanish sauce. Komagura, which has been aged to enhance its umami, brings out the umami of beef. It also went well with the spicy *romesco* sauce. Served finally was a dessert of Kyoho and Shine Muscat grapes and milk gelato. Sake definitely goes well with sweets. Paired with this dessert was Kasegi Gashira Junmai. The fruity and refreshing acidity of this sake pleasantly washes the sweetness remaining on the tongue.

The day's dishes, prepared using a wide range of ingredients and cooking methods, offered all five basic tastes of sweetness, saltiness, sourness, bitterness and umami, as well as spicy and astringent flavors. The sake brands remarkably harmonized with them and enhanced their flavors. It proved to be an evening that convinced participants sake has the flexibility for enjoyment with any flavor of food.



Ambassadors from nine countries broke open sake casks lined up on the stage in a traditional *kagami biraki* ceremony.



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Destination Restaurants 2024

AUTHENTIC JAPAN SELECTION

French cuisine featuring fish fresh from Suruga Bay

By TAEKO TERA0

The city of Yaizu in Shizuoka Prefecture faces Suruga Bay and boasts a number of splendid views of Mount Fuji, as well as hot springs. Honestly speaking, though, the city is somewhat lacking in impact compared to neighboring cities when it comes to attracting many overseas tourists. In these circumstances, fine-dining restaurants have been a beacon of hope for Yaizu.

Over the past decade, a succession of Yaizu restaurants have been gaining attention, a notable example being Chakaiseki Onjaku, a Destination Restaurant of 2022. Thus, gastronomes from both inside and outside Japan are now visiting the area. The central figure in this trend is Naoki Maeda, owner of Sasue Maeda Fish Shop in Yaizu, which has been run by the Maeda family for five generations.

Maeda said, "Twenty years ago, I had the idea that the town could be revitalized if three good restaurants were established. So I joined forces with ambitious chefs, suggesting types of fish, cooking methods and so on. At the same time, I've also been working to raise the quality of fish, for instance by getting fishermen to change their processing methods."

As a result, there are now six fine-dining restaurants in and around Yaizu that have teamed up with Sasue Maeda Fish Shop. One of these is Chisou Nishi Kenichi, a Destination Restaurant of 2024. Owner Kenichi Nishi and Maeda first met when Nishi, after an apprenticeship in France, was training at a Japanese restaurant in his hometown, Hiroshima, to study fish preparation in earnest. Nishi said he was stunned by the beauty and excellent condition

of the fish delivered to Hiroshima in styrofoam boxes from Yaizu. He later struck out on his own, and in 2019 he opened the French restaurant Chisou 2924 in Hiroshima. A year after that, he was finally ready to begin using fish from Sasue Maeda Fish Shop. Incidentally, the city of Hiroshima is famous throughout Japan for the excellence of its fish, which is hardly surprising considering its location on the Seto Inland Sea.

"Even so," said Nishi, "the fish from Sasue Maeda Fish Shop — including Mr. Maeda's signature fish, *mochiuma katsuo* (a type of bonito) — is so delicious in terms of both texture and flavor, it's on another level."

The problem was that fish caught in Yaizu arrived in Hiroshima a day and a half later, meaning a little of its freshness was lost. In his cuisine, Nishi wanted to use fish that had been caught in Suruga Bay the same morning. It was this wish that motivated him to move to Yaizu, despite the ongoing COVID-19 situation. In June of 2022, he opened the French restaurant Chisou Nishi Kenichi in a location three minutes on foot from Sasue Maeda Fish Shop. The restaurant's exterior architecture is Japanese in style. In back is a courtyard, and in front there is an open kitchen with an eight-seat counter. Both lunch and dinner service are exclusively *omakase* (chef's choice) course menus consisting of 10 or 11 dishes, eight of which feature fish in starring roles, and cost ¥16,500 (\$110). The appetizer of "swimming *aji*" marinated in *sansho* pepper oil and soy sauce — made with horse mackerel that has been left to swim in an aquarium and regain energy after being caught — might be called



The restaurant's "fresh fish pie" is made from seasonally changing fish wrapped in pastry dough as diners watch, then baked crisp and golden brown. The sauce, made with seafood stock seasoned with sherry vinegar, contains no butter; its richness is continually enhanced through daily replenishment, in the style of the *tare* sauce used for broiled eel.

PHOTOS: TAKAO OHTA

Nishi's take on sashimi. When the meaty fish is cut with a knife and placed on the taste buds, there is a delight that is quite different from the experience of conventional sashimi. Nishi's fritters are made from Pacific rudderfish, the moisture retention level of which has been enhanced through the use of 12 types of ice of differing shapes and tem-

peratures in the cooling process. The fish is fried in untoasted sesame oil, and the fritters are amazingly juicy.

Today, Maeda's fish appears on the tables of famous restaurants throughout Japan. But when it is eaten locally, the flavors are truly exceptional. It is well worth a visit to Yaizu to experience them for yourself.



Shizuoka Prefecture (French)

Chisou Nishi Kenichi

4-8-9 Nishikogawa, Yaizu-shi, Shizuoka Prefecture Tel: 054-625-8818
https://www.instagram.com/chisou_nishikenichi/



KENICHI NISHI

Born in Hiroshima in 1980. At the age of 20, Nishi began his culinary journey as a part-time employee in a restaurant in Hiroshima. Later, after a stint at a French *yōshoku* (Western-style cuisine) restaurant, he moved to Tokyo when he was 27 and studied the foundations of French cuisine at a restaurant there. At the age of 32, he traveled to France and trained in Paris. After returning to Hiroshima the following year, he mastered fish preparation skills while working at the Japanese restaurant Chisou Sottaku Ito. In 2019 he set out on his own, opening the French restaurant Chisou 2924 in Hiroshima. In 2022, he relocated to Yaizu in Shizuoka Prefecture and launched Chisou Nishi Kenichi.

Summary

駿河湾で獲れたての魚を使うフランス料理。

静岡県焼津市は駿河湾に面し、富士山を望む絶景ポイントや温泉もある。だが、インバウンドを呼び込むにはやや観光資源が乏しく、人口13万人超の街は少子高齢化により活気を失いつつある。そんななか、ここ10年ほどで〈サスエ前田魚店〉前田尚毅とタッグを組むガストロノミーなレスト

ランが焼津市及び、近郊で6軒まで増え、国内外のフーディーズがこの地を訪れるようになっている。「Destination Restaurants」に2年前に受賞した〈茶懐石 温石〉、今年選ばれた〈馳走 西健一〉などがその代表だ。西健一は2019年に広島市で開いたフランス料理店でも〈サスエ前田魚店〉の魚を使っていたが、

朝揚げた魚をその日に使いたいという思いが募り、焼津に移住。2022年6月に自分の名前を冠したレストランを開いた。

今、全国の有名レストランで前田の魚は登場するが、やはり地元での味わいは格別。それを確認するためだけでも焼津市を訪れる価値はある。



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Additional shows and venues

Kabuki Performance

“Hikosan Gongen Chikai no Sokedachi”

Jan. 5 (Sun.) – Jan. 27 (Mon.) 1pm

New National Theatre, Tokyo [Playhouse]

Traditional Japanese Music Performance

“Discover HOGAKU: Hit tunes in EDO”

Jan. 25 (Sat.) 2pm

Yomiuri Otemachi Hall

Shomyo Performance

“Discover SHOMYO:

Shomyo (Buddhist chant) of Chishakuin Temple”

Feb. 1 (Sat.) 2pm

Tiara Koto (in Koto Ward)



Program I [starts 11am]

“Hidakagawa Iriai Zakura”

“Urikohime to Amanjaku”

“Kanatsubo Oyaji Koi no Tatehiki”

Program II [starts 2:30pm]

“Ichinotani Futaba Gunki”

“Dannoura Kabuto Gunki”

Program III [starts 6:45pm]

“Sonezaki Shinju”

Theatres/Performance Dates

Dec. 4 (Wed.) – Dec. 13* (Fri.), 2024
*except 12/9

at Koto Culture Centre Hall
(in Koto Ward)

Dec. 17 (Tue.) – Dec. 19 (Thur.), 2024
at Kanagawa Momijizaka Hall
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