

## 45 under 45 - Young Japanese Architecture

23<sup>rd</sup> October 2002 to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2003

**Curator:** Shozo Baba (curator, architecture critic in Tokyo, former long-standing editor of periodical *Japan Architect*)

**Press tour:** Tuesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2002, 10.30 am

**Opening:** Tuesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2002, 4.30 pm

**Lectures** (in the Ringturm Exhibition Centre):

Wednesday, 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2002, 6.30 p.m. (architect Hiroshi Hara)

Additional lectures will be held in November (architect Toyo Ito) and January (architect Kazuyo Sejima)

### Exhibition site

Wiener Städtische Allgemeine Versicherung AG

Ringturm Exhibition Centre

A-1010 Vienna Schottenring 30

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### Opening hours

Monday to Friday, 9.00 am - 6.00 pm; admission free

Thursdays until 7.30 pm

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Photographic material is available upon request and can also be found at <http://www.wienerstaedtische.at> in the "Art and Culture" section.

**In its far-eastern excursus “45 under 45 - Young Japanese Architecture”, the Architecture in the Ringturm series is showing the work of the highly respected youngest generation of Japanese architects. The show runs from 23rd 2002 to 31 January 2003 and among its 45 architects under 45 are names already known in Europe, such as Kazuyo Sejima, Kazuhiro Kojima, Yoshiharu Tsukamoto and Shigeru Ban.**

Because of their age, the architects in the exhibition could be labelled the *CAD (Computer Aided Design) Generation*. Previously, architects used to sketch out their ideas on paper, translate these into a plan and then use a model to check parameters such as volume and space. For the younger architects, the computer has truly arrived as a “tool” they would find it very difficult to dispense with. Unlike the older generation, these younger architects use the computer as an integral part of their technique, not simply as a drawing aid (ideas often only come with the computer on and the CAD program running). Thus the world of architecture is currently faced with major changes in architectonic design - it could be said initiated by Japan - as a result of CAD (a phenomenon that architectural conferences have already started to examine).

**Japanese architecture:** the trend in the work of this generation of CAD-influenced architects is towards masterly design, brightness, lightness and sparsity of detail, replacing the heaviness and oppressive character of a lot of earlier work. This development can be understood not least in terms of the socio-political background of the times in which the architects grew up: a secure life - without war - and above all the economic flowering of the big cities. Despite current talk of major recession, certain truths should not be overlooked, such as the fact that wages have risen by a factor of twenty since 1955 while prices have only increased six-fold. Against this background, architecture is no longer purely a career, it is - inevitably - becoming a playground for personal, individual ideas.

A precursor for the thinking behind this reduced approach to architectonic design is to be found in a work by one of the world’s most innovative architects: Toyo Ito’s “Tent of the Nomad Girl” (*Yuboku shojo no pao*, 1985). This structure, built for a trade fair-like exhibition, expressed the temporary, light and unconventional nature of this new architecture outstandingly using the simplest of means.

A specifically Japanese concept central to most of the projects in the Ringturm exhibition is the so-called *Superflat* concept, which basically involves a levelling out of the hierarchy of rooms: the entrance hall of a house, for example, is designed to be of equal importance as the living room, the toilet or the corridor. All rooms are on an equal footing as far as their relative significance is concerned.

**Training:** In terms of training, a system exists in Japan that exists nowhere else in the world: graduates of the same architecture course at the same university end up working in the widest possible range of branches within the profession - in design, in construction firms, with materials,

in the actual execution of building projects as a site manager or for a public authority. While still studying, students decide whether they wish later to work on their own, in a large architectural office or in the architectonic design department of a large construction firm. Those who opt for the latter have the opportunity to take responsibility for large-scale projects at an early stage. Both groups (independent freelance architects and employees of larger companies) are represented.

**The exhibition:** Among the studios represented in the exhibition are well-known names such as Kazuyo Sejima (Summer Academy, Salzburg 2002) and Ryue Nishizawa. Both were included in an exhibition in Galerie Aedes in Berlin in 2000. A monograph was devoted to them in the Spanish series of publications Croquis, and this year in Salzburg they were recipients of the first Vincenzo Scamozzi prize ever awarded.

Currently under construction (since 1999) is the Museum for Contemporary Art in Kanazawa, designed by Sejima and Nishizawa. All their projects are distinguished by their use of unconventional, surprising forms realised using surprising, redefined materials. Thus the interior walls of a detached family house in Tokyo currently in the planning stage are designed of one centimetre-thick steel plating, as originally used in shipbuilding. The architect's idea in making this unusual choice of material was to avoid reducing the limited amount of space available on this small plot still further by having thick walls.

An example of unusual form is the "Small House" in Tokyo. The distorted geometry of the structure's exterior was dictated by the client's own wishes. The dimensions of the individual floors had to be optimised in keeping with their precisely defined uses, yielding a façade adapted to accommodate the ceilings of the house's different storeys (photograph).

Yoshiharu Tsukamoto and Momoyo Kaijima have attracted a lot of attention through the work of "Studio Bow-Wow", which they founded. Their "Mini House" featured in the "Mini Houses" travelling exhibition launched in Europe two years ago became to some extent the trademark of this reduced architectonic form. The two architects have been concentrating on plots that would be considered unfeasible by our standards. The extremely dense pattern of building and enormously high land prices in Tokyo force architects to come up with creative solutions. In their projects Tsukamoto and Kaijima repeatedly attempt to respond to this phenomenon with an appropriate building type.

Shigeru Ban has been able to present some particularly impressive work in the form of the Japanese pavilion for Expo 2000 in Hanover. This pavilion, a span construction, had a biomorph-like translucent outer skin shaped like the back of a beetle that alluded not least to the well-known Japanese tradition of making light objects out of paper (photograph).

In view of today's environmental problems, the architect created the building using a paper tube structure: erection, dismantling and recycling were designed to form part of the same self-contained story. One of the main differences between this and "everyday" buildings is that their story ends (at first glance) once they have been built. The services of Otto Frei, considered the

leading structural engineer for lattice structures ever since creating his roofs for the Munich Olympics, were engaged for this project by Ban.

Sunao Ando displays a successful solution for the Atom Bomb Museum in Nagasaki: his use of a large form (steel and glass construction) bathed in light emphasises the gravity of the historical event (photograph).

Another extraordinary project is the senior citizen's home designed by Motoyasu Muramatsu. This building responds outstandingly to its spectacular site on the steeply sloping Pacific coast. By breaking up the load-bearing elements into a form of skeleton, it delivers the greatest possible degree of openness and provides its inhabitants with a unique panorama (photograph).

The range of buildings shown in the exhibition covers all areas and scales of architectonic function. On display, for example, are a play area in a zoo (Akiko Takahashi), interesting detached family homes (Kazuyo Sejima, who built the "Small House" in Tokyo for Sony's Walkman designer, and Manabu Chiba's "House in Black"), large museums (Ando Sunao: Atom Bomb Museum, Nagasaki and Yui Tezuka: Matsunomyama Museum of Natural Sciences), Motoyasu Muramatsu's senior citizen's home, but also an enormous showroom for Toyota, the "ToyotaMegaWeb" (Koichi Arima), production and administration buildings (Kazutaka Watanabe with OKI Electronics) and schools (Kazuo Watabe "Light Scene").

Along with the display boards containing photographs and plans designed by the architects themselves, around 30 models reveal that in addition to work on the computer, these projects have also been developed using detailed three-dimensional studies.

The exhibition has been independently organised by Wiener Städtische's Architecture in the Ringturm in co-operation with the Japanese embassy and the Nippon-Österreich-Japanische Gesellschaft, Vienna. The exhibition is supported by sponsors (see folder).

**The catalogue (German/Japanese/English):** "45 under 45 - Young Japanese Architecture." Verlag Anton Pustet, Salzburg and Munich 2002; approx. 160 pages including numerous colour illustrations; multiple pages devoted to the projects of each architect; biographies and an index of names; introduction by Shozo Baba. Price: EUR 36.

*Press info regarding ARCHITECTURE IN THE RINGTURM as well as photographs can be found at <http://www.wienerstaedtische.at> in the "Art and Culture" section.*