

# A Japanese Constellation

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A Japanese Constellation

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The Museum of Modern Art, New York

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The Museum of Modern Art has interwoven Japanese architecture into its presentations from its inaugural architecture exhibition of 1932, *Modern Architecture: International Exhibition*, in which Mamoru Yamada's Tokyo Central Telegraph Office (1925) represented Japan's burgeoning modernism. In 1954, Junzo Yoshimura's full-scale post-and-beam demonstration house transformed the Museum's sculpture garden, bringing to its environs a modernism less familiar to New York audiences. The third and last of the House in the Garden series (1949–55), following projects by Marcel Breuer and Gregory Ain, Yoshimura's house combined seventeenth-century precedents with traditional *shoin* building techniques.

The very walls of the Museum are now the beneficiaries of this lineage in the graceful canopies of Yoshio Taniguchi's 2004 extension that frame the sculpture garden. Together with the collection's representation of the Japanese postwar turn to utopic, technoscientific schemes for cities, exemplified by Metabolist projects like Kisho Kurokawa's Helix City (1961) and Fumihiko Maki's proposed megastructures, as well as the imprint of Japanese influence in works from Frank Lloyd Wright to Rem Koolhaas, this history runs through the Museum's holdings. *A Japanese Constellation* introduces a contemporary chapter, turning to an architecture both in conversation with and responding to these earlier projects.

With *A Japanese Constellation*, one of the Museum's first exhibitions in ten years to focus on architecture from a particular country, and the first dedicated solely to Japanese practitioners, curator Pedro Gadanho focuses on a small cluster of contemporary Japanese architects working within the larger field, exploring their formal inventiveness and close professional relationships to frame a radical model of practice in the twenty-first century.

Unique in focus, *A Japanese Constellation's* forty-four projects represent a diverse panorama of work from small domestic projects to museums. Presented in models, drawings, and projected slideshows, the work highlights the significant structural innovations and use of transparent and lightweight materials, while foregrounding the architects' refreshing commitment to the social lives of their buildings, reviving a social conscience that characterized earlier avant-gardes. Drawing on Japanese material traditions, the gallery design casts aside walls for soft partitions of semitranslucent fabric, which act as surfaces for multimedia and provide an immersive visual experience.

The luminous presentation in the gallery is complemented by the catalogue's generous color portfolios and critical essays by curators, architects, and scholars writing both from within and outside of Japan, which situate this architectural genealogy within a longer chronology of Japanese practice and, more broadly, a tangled inheritance of global modernity. *A Japanese Constellation* promises to be an indispensable resource for practitioners, students of architecture, and the general public.

I congratulate Pedro Gadanho, Director, Museum of Art, Architecture and Technology, Lisbon, for his engagement in theorizing new directions in contemporary architecture. Begun during his appointment as Curator of Contemporary Architecture at MoMA, *A Japanese Constellation* has been long in the making. His dedication and insight, together with the support of Phoebe Springstubb, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Architecture and Design, have brought this catalogue and exhibition to fruition. On behalf of the Trustees and staff of the Museum, I am grateful to the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation, The Japan Foundation, and Chris A. Wachenheim for major support in funding this endeavor. I deeply appreciate the generous funding provided by Obayashi Corporation, Kajima Corporation, Shimizu Corporation, Takenaka Corporation, the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, Kumagai Gumi, and The Obayashi Foundation. I extend sincere thanks for additional funding provided by MoMA's Annual Exhibition Fund and special thanks to Muji. The Dale S. And Norman Mills Leff Publication Fund provided essential support for this book.

Glenn D. Lowry  
Director, The Museum of Modern Art

*A Japanese Constellation* highlights a luminous configuration of architects; the realization of this ambitious exhibition and catalogue would not have been possible without a corresponding group of collaborators who dedicated innumerable hours and expertise. At The Museum of Modern Art, we are grateful to the leadership and counsel of Glenn D. Lowry, Director; Ramona Bannayan, Senior Deputy Director for Exhibitions, Collections, and Programs; Todd Bishop, Senior Deputy Director, External Affairs; James Gara, Chief Operating Officer; Peter Reed, Senior Deputy Director for Curatorial Affairs; and Trish Jeffers, Director of Human Resources.

The exhibition has been the beneficiary of a generous group of supporters. We extend sincere thanks to the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation, the Japan Foundation, Chris A. Wachenheim, Obayashi Corporation, Kajima Corporation, Shimizu Corporation, Takenaka Corporation, the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, Kumagai Gumi, and the Obayashi Foundation for major support in funding *A Japanese Constellation*. In addition, we deeply appreciate the in-kind support from MUJI, which provided the materials for the exhibition's fabric walls and furniture.

The project is indebted to the group of architects featured in the exhibition. They were extremely generous and helpful hosts during trips to Tokyo, gave us unfettered access to their studios, entrusted us with their models and drawings, and accommodated the sometimes unpredictable process of putting together an exhibition. Together with Phoebe Springstubb, Curatorial Assistant, I extend warm thanks to the individuals at each office: Toyo Ito, Julia Li, Yuma Ota, and Maika Takagaki of Toyo Ito & Associates, Architects; Kazuyo Sejima, Ryue Nishizawa, Riccardo Cannatà, Tommy Haddock, Kenichi Fujisawa, and Shohei Yoshida of Kazuyo Sejima & Associates, Office of Ryue Nishizawa, and SANAA; Sou Fujimoto, Hugh Hsu, Nikki Minemura, and Masaki Iwata of Sou Fujimoto Architects; Akihisa Hirata, Hitomi Namiki, and Yuko Tonogi of Akihisa Hirata Architecture Office; Junya Ishigami, Haruka Shoji, and Wataru Shinji of Junya.Ishigami + Associates. We thank as well the individuals at each office, too many to enumerate here, whose efforts during the lead-up to this exhibition and before were no doubt essential. In addition, we are grateful to Reiko Sudo of NUNO, whose advice and expertise was instrumental in the early stages of planning the exhibition's fabric walls. We offer sincere thanks to lenders Waverly Lowell, Environmental Design Archives, College of Environmental Design, University of California, Berkeley; and Sharon and Bob Prince of Grace Farms, who generously supported the fabrication of a new model for the exhibition that has enriched it immensely.

The Department of Publications, led by Christopher Hudson, has been critical to the success of this catalogue. We thank Marc Sapir, Production Director, who both shepherded us toward meeting production deadlines and, with a sharp eye, attended to the many color images reproduced here. Charles Kim, Associate Publisher, kept us on budget, while David Frankel, Editorial Director, and Emily Hall, Editor, offered editorial counsel. We are especially grateful to Sarah Resnick, the catalogue's steadfast editor, who has been an incredibly attentive and patient critic, navigating essays composed in different languages and across time zones, juggling the many moving parts, and shaping the final content. Design work by Edwin van Gelder of Mainstudio brings the book together in a lucid and singular layout.

We would also like to thank dedicated colleagues around the Museum who have lent their time and expertise to the exhibition. We thank Kim Mitchell, Chief Communications Officer; Margaret Doyle, Director of Communications; and Paul Jackson, Communications Manager, for ensuring the exhibition's public presence and press. Lauren Stakias, Director, Exhibition and Program Funding; Bobby Kean, Assistant Director, Exhibition Funding; and their team have been instrumental in securing funding. We express sincere thanks to Rachel Kim, Associate Coordinator, Department of Exhibition Planning and Administration, for managing the exhibition's resources and budget. We are grateful to Caitlin Kelly, Senior Registrar Assistant, and Steven Wheeler, Associate Registrar, Collections, Department of Collection Management and Exhibition Registration, for expertly coordinating the logistics, transport, and care of models that

traveled so far. We are beholden to Roger Griffith, Associate Sculpture Conservator, Department of Conservation, who went above and beyond in the complex conservation of the models, among other things, traveling across the Atlantic and advising on the purchase of live plants. Erika Mosier, Conservator, guided us in the care of the exhibition's delicate works on paper.

The Departments of Graphic Design and Exhibition Design and Production have found inventive ways to convey the exhibition's concept. We extend our appreciation to Matthew Cox, Assistant Production Manager, who oversaw the installation and engineered the intricate finishing and hanging details of its translucent fabric walls. Aaron Harrow, Design Manager, and Mike Gibbons, A/V Technician, were a superb A/V team, composing and expertly choreographing the exhibition's multimedia projections. In the Department of Graphic Design, Ingrid Chou, Associate Creative Director; Derek Flynn, Art Director; Claire Corey, Production Manager; and Danielle Hall, Designer, created an articulate and vivid graphic identity for the exhibition.

In the Department of Architecture and Design, we are deeply appreciative of the support and valuable feedback offered by the entire staff throughout the project. I am grateful to Barry Bergdoll, Curator, for enthusiastically welcoming and supporting this project upon my arrival in 2012 as the newly appointed Curator of Contemporary Architecture at MoMA. I want to express special gratitude to Phoebe Springstubb, Curatorial Assistant, who provided tireless and dedicated support during the four-year-long curatorial endeavor, including, among other things, authoring the descriptive project texts in this publication and acting as the critical link between the architects and collaborators in the production of both the catalogue and exhibition. Emma Presler, Department Manager; Paul Galloway, Collection Specialist; and Pamela Popeson, Collection Preparator, have offered invaluable assistance and advice. A dedicated group of interns made essential contributions at various points during the preparations: Aslihan Gunhan compiled core research informing the exhibition; Anna Sutherland translated texts and researched images; Anna Blair, stepping in as the project went into production, provided careful work on image permissions, proofing, and the organization of exhibition slideshows.

Additional colleagues across the Museum provided support. Pablo Helguera, Director, Adult and Academic Education; Jess Van Nostrand, Assistant Director, Exhibition Programs and Gallery Initiatives; and Sarah Kennedy, Associate Educator, Lab Programs, ably organized the exhibition's public program. Sara Bodinson, Director, Interpretation, Research, and Digital Learning, and Maria Marchenkova, Assistant Editor, Publications, were thoughtful readers and editorial guides on all exhibition text. Rebecca Stokes, Director, Digital Initiatives, and Gretchen Scott, Building Project Digital Marketing Manager, Department of Marketing, brought the project to the enthusiastic attention of the users of Instagram. Tunji Adeniji, Director of Facilities and Safety; Tyrone Wyllie, Director of Security; Rob Jung, Manager; Sarah Wood, Assistant Manager; and Tom Krueger, Assistant Manager, Art Handling and Preparation, have been indispensable to the management of operations, in-house transportation, installation, and security.

Lastly, we wish to acknowledge the thoughtful contributions of authors Terunobu Fujimori, Taro Igarashi, and Julian Worrall to this publication.

Pedro Gadanho  
Director, Museum of Art, Architecture and Technology, Lisbon

new project but also yielded an intellectual context in which the generations that followed could chase their own radical visions. Thus, SANAA, a firm founded by Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa (born 1966), persistently reinvents avant-garde strategies. They employ abstract functional diagrams to create distinctive spatial experiences that, above all, privilege unexpected discovery and sensorial pleasure on the part of their users. Thus, Sou Fujimoto (born 1971), an architect of the following generation, aspires to “create a fundamental or new relationship between people”<sup>25</sup> by advancing architectural strategies with indeterminate conceptions of space. He dares to promote artistic statements that, despite invalidating architectural functionalism, captivate clients nonetheless, offering them a different kind of everyday life.<sup>26</sup> Thus, Akihisa Hirata (born 1971), who envisages transcending the limitations of late modern architecture in “an era without ethics,” adopts radical formal and ecological strategies that privilege architecture’s “interdependent relationship with its surroundings.”<sup>27</sup> Thus, Junya Ishigami (born 1974) investigates the physical limits of architecture, artistically exploiting lightness, structure, and scale (fig. 6). His pursuit of “pure possibilities”<sup>28</sup> afforded his work the impetus of an avant-garde disconnected from the contingencies of an increasingly conservative environment.

Early in the twenty-first century, Toyo Ito, SANAA, and their younger affiliates thoroughly questioned every conceivable architectural rule and premise. Their architectural explorations resisted the shortcomings of neomodernist designs emerging elsewhere, while simultaneously remaining true to the destabilizing stances of the first modern avant-gardes. Moreover, these architects sought out exquisite, unexpected beauty, charging their work—and that of the Japanese architects they have influenced—with a mix of ethics and aesthetics that in other architectural contexts was slowly disappearing.

### Aesthetic Statements and Social Commitment

*As a philosopher I have approached architecture from the phenomenological viewpoint and have always argued that architectural experience entails a wide variety of factors and [cannot] exist without them. I felt that Ito too . . . [knew] that architecture is inseparable from the experiences of the people who live in it and that it cannot be understood solely in terms of visual styles.*

—Koji Taki<sup>29</sup>

In a 2001 curatorial project, I examined the work of a group of contemporary Dutch architects and proposed that their approach, which relied heavily on functional diagrams, attempted to surpass the apparent randomness of aesthetic decisions in the architectural design process. These diagrams, which translate directly into

What began as a spontaneous response to a fast-changing urban environment would soon prompt a return to avant-garde ideals in Japan, an updated version of the radicalism found in early twentieth-century modernism. To be sure, the transformation wasn’t immediate. There was, for instance, a period in which these architects were attracted to the idea of “withdrawal” from urban intensity.<sup>18</sup> As Ito put it, “the act of carving out discrete points of space—beautifully untouched and devoid of inscribed meaning—in cities seemed very fresh at the time.”<sup>19</sup> Projects such as Ito’s White U, of 1976, in Tokyo (see fig. 2, p. 189), and even Sejima’s much later Saishunkan Seiyaku Women’s Dormitory, of 1991, in Kumamoto City (fig. 4), created an enclosed architectural universe that, following on the legacy of Kazuo Shinohara (1925–2006) and of the oil crisis of 1973, rejects the surrounding urban chaos. In a recent interview, Ito emphasized that these buildings—which, as he described them, “turned their backs to the city”—correspond to an “era of introspection,” each an attempt to be “in touch with the changing circumstances of society.”<sup>20</sup>

Nonetheless, he would soon recognize that “architecture’s attempts at autonomy or artistry,” while valid in the 1970s, were no longer justifiable.<sup>21</sup> Sejima, on the other hand, rejected the hierarchical thinking inherent in conventional approaches to architecture. Her Women’s Dormitory reinvented the city “outside” in a living space that, as Yuko Hasegawa, chief curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo, noted, destabilized the “idea of borders between private and public domains” and critically examined “concepts such as personal space, identity, society and public.”<sup>22</sup>

Ito upheld as essential to his vision a critical stance he inherited from the modern avant-garde: that architecture should serve as a “rejection of the existing social system” and as a form of social critique. This belief could be seen as problematic when worldwide the architect’s mission was increasingly recognized as the simple delivery of functional artifacts. Yet, following the reception of Ito’s groundbreaking 2001 Sendai Mediatheque (fig. 5), a cultural resource center in Sendai, the architect confessed he felt heartened that his most radical proposal to date was also the one audiences met with the most delight. One of Ito’s main objectives for the center, whose holdings include film, books, magazines, and visual art, was to do away with the “fixed barriers” that have traditionally divided various mediums, and to propose a model for “how cultural facilities should be from now on.”<sup>23</sup> The building’s ecstatic reception, both within the architectural milieu and among everyday users, affirmed that a transformative design concept can in fact influence social perceptions and that, as held by the early modernists, architecture’s “critical spirit had the power to change society.”<sup>24</sup>

This affirmation not only encouraged Ito to invent novel architectural languages with each

Embracing postmodernism’s semiotic diversity rather than its style,<sup>12</sup> Ito’s proposals for a nonspecific architecture driven by an avant-garde impetus and a quintessentially modern agenda would mold the interests of a constellation of Japanese architects extending more than three generations. The premise of this book, and the related exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art, is precisely that this lineage of architects both affirms and heightens the allure of Japanese architecture worldwide. Yet, the book also presents a set of architectural positions that may be considered an important model for the architecture of the twenty-first century—not least for this model’s rearrangement of hierarchical relationships among architects themselves.

### Reinstating the Architectural Avant-Garde

*Architecture that is modern in style only no longer has the power to change society. Architecture that is recognized only by architects and not by the public has no future. I believe that an architecture that truly has the power to reform society today must channel its critical power into a different form of proposal.*

—Toyo Ito<sup>13</sup>

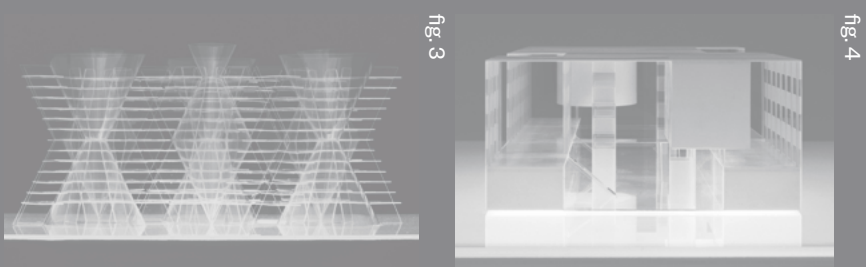
The international influence of contemporary Japanese architecture in the 1990s followed on postmodernist debates that polarized around a regression of architecture to its more conservative stylistic roots and a contrasting desire to prolong the modernist project. Although in Europe and the United States postmodernist architects embraced either historicism or its nemesis, deconstructivist architecture,<sup>14</sup> in Japan architects responded instead to the increasing omnipresence of popular urban culture. As architectural theorist Charles Jencks said of Ito and other Tokyo practitioners during this era, their embrace of the city as a “theatre of signs and symbols” reiterated the emergence of semiotics during the 1970s.<sup>15</sup> In an interview conducted shortly after the turn of the century, Ito suggested that architecture must act as a “media suit,” by which he means, in his own words, as a “figuration of [the] information vortex.”<sup>16</sup> Following Marshall McLuhan’s theory that clothes and shelter act as an extension of our skin—that is, as a means to adjust to the natural environment—Ito claimed that contemporary architecture should serve as “a means to adjust ourselves to the information environment.”<sup>17</sup>

Fig. 1: Moreau Kusunoki Architects (France, est. 2011). Guggenheim Helsinki Museum, Proposal, 2015. View from the north square. Fig. 2: Arata Isozaki (Japanese, born 1931). Re-ruined Hiroshima, Hiroshima. Project, 1988. Perspective: ink and gouache with cut-and-pasted gelatin silver print on gelatin silver print, 13 7/8 × 36 7/8" (35.2 × 93.7 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of The Howard Gilman Foundation. Fig. 3: Fumihiko Maki (Japanese, born 1928). Gdigi Structures. Project, 1967. Plexiglass and acrylic, 5 3/4 × 12 3/4 × 10 7/8" (14.6 × 32.4 × 27.6 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of the architect in honor of Philip Johnson. Fig. 4: Kazuyo Sejima (Japanese, born 1956). Saishunkan Seiyaku Women’s Dormitory, Kumamoto City, Japan, 1990–91. Scale model 1:100. Acrylic/resin, 3 1/2 × 27 5/8 × 27 5/8" (8.9 × 70.2 × 70.2 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of the architect.

erraticism and instability of national and global economic cycles.<sup>6</sup> Japanese architecture anticipated and explored the ways in which the discipline could mirror the problems and aspirations of a new social condition.

As the twentieth century transitioned into the twenty-first, a new crop of Japanese architects found international acclaim. The elegant restraint and precise materiality of Tadao Ando’s (born 1941) “critical regionalism”<sup>7</sup> and the technical optimism and spatial innovation of Toyo Ito’s (born 1941) conceptualism rendered Japanese architects influential once again in the global arena. Working at the crossroads of technological and social change, many of these architects intimated design languages that offered refuge from the frantic pace of urbanization; others, conversely, embraced the imaginative possibilities of “things to come.” The subsequent generation of architects, among them Kuma, Kazuyo Sejima (born 1956), and Ban, respectively explored the renewal of tradition, of radical spatial possibilities, and of the innovative potential of sustainable design. The global recognition of Japan’s architects skyrocketed; in no other national context would a group of architects achieve such high acclaim for their regional characteristics. Shortly after earlier masters Tange and Fumihiko Maki (born 1928, fig. 3) won the Pritzker Architecture Prize, each of the aforementioned architects became laureates of the profession’s highest-ranking honor, with the exception of Kuma.<sup>8</sup>

Ito, in particular, was highly conscious of the socioeconomic transformations around him, and was keen to use this awareness to propel and sustain his architectural thinking. In the controversial yet essential manifesto quoted in this section’s epigraph—authored, it is worth noting, in the wake of the country’s 1980s asset-price bubble economy—Ito foresees the media frenzy that would increasingly mark the reception of high-end architecture. “Today, architecture is being constructed and consumed at a tremendous pace,” Ito wrote. “Thus, we have no choice but to stand before the sea of consumption, immerse ourselves, and swim through it to discover what lies on the far shore.”<sup>9</sup> Taking a critical stance toward the previous wave of Japanese avant-garde architects, who achieved national and international acclaim only to abandon their utopian ideals,<sup>10</sup> Ito urged his contemporaries to retain experimentation as an essential trait of what he called a “vibrant and stimulating” architecture that is “generated at the margins,” and thus distinguishes itself from mass processes of production and consumption.<sup>11</sup>



As was the case across various fields in Japan during the early twentieth century, architects, too, had looked to Western culture to inspire change within the country's deeply ingrained traditions. As Terunobu Fujimori recounts elsewhere in this book (p. 73), in the first half of the twentieth century, a number of architects from Japan worked with some of Europe and the United States' most important modernists. Eventually, these Japanese apprentices would bring home innovative materials and a novel interest in functionalism, borrowings that would in part serve to fulfill ambitions of modernization across Japanese society. But the influence wasn't merely unidirectional: classical Japanese art and architecture had for some time generated considerable fascination among early modernists in the West. For those architects privileging both clarity of design and functionality over ornament—including masters such as Frank Lloyd Wright (1867–1959), Bruno Taut (1880–1938), and Walter Gropius (1883–1969)—traditional architecture from Japan offered a unique aesthetic, its undecorated geometric constructions and refined spatial qualities highly unusual. This mutual curiosity fomented a prolonged exchange between Japanese and Western architecture throughout the twentieth century.<sup>4</sup>

The resulting architectural cross-pollinations, the products of a fruitful give-and-take between two distinct conceptions of space, assumed different forms in the postwar period. During the 1960s, for instance, the Japanese Metabolists, as much as figures such as Kenzo Tange (1913–2005) or Arata Isozaki (born 1931), absorbed impulses from the Western avant-garde (fig. 2). They rose to prominence in Japanese society and eventually captured the interest of many forward-thinking architects elsewhere.<sup>5</sup> Two decades later, in the 1980s, the country's development of a local but significant variant of postmodernism not only aligned many Japanese architects with their Western counterparts; it also influenced architectural styles in the international arena.

In the 1990s, the circumstances were suited once again for Japanese architecture to become a reference for architects outside Japan. As an intensely metropolitan culture thrived in Tokyo and other major Japanese cities, the nation's architects found themselves immersed in a global culture as much as in an urban society fronting numerous trends that would come to mark the start of the twenty-first century—from the explosion of consumer culture to the omnipresence of information to the increasing

## Prelude

As I was beginning work on this text in the spring of 2015, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation announced the winners of a competition for a new museum in Helsinki with pomp and circumstance (fig. 1). According to a museum press release, the call attracted more entries than any of its kind in history, with 1,715 submissions from nearly eighty countries. Yet what captured my attention was the fact that the young French-Japanese firm awarded the commission, Moreau Kusunoki Architectes (est. 2011), is directed by disciples of Japan's SANAA (est. 1995), Kengo Kuma (born 1954), and Shigeru Ban (born 1957), whose architecture has been met with wide acclaim. This was, to my mind, yet another sign of the influence contemporary Japanese architects wield over the discipline worldwide. Moreover, their impact was escalating as the work of global architects began to be received with a new mood. As the vice chairman of the city of Helsinki's executive board said to the *New York Times* on the occasion, "It's not the fashion to create 'wow' architecture anymore,"<sup>1</sup> alluding to Frank Gehry's design for the Guggenheim Bilbao almost two decades before. Cast against the expressive flamboyancy of the American museum's first outpost, the submission by this virtually unknown duo of young architects was distinctly contextual, embracing local traditions and blending with the existing city. Mark Wigley, jury chair and professor and former dean of the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation at Columbia University, told the *Times* that the proposal "kind of undoes the monumentality of most museums."<sup>2</sup> While the invariable, sometimes pharaonic styles of so-called starchitects—architects whose worldwide celebrity and acclaim have transformed them into idols of design—were gradually coming under attack, the subtle but influential sensitivity of some Japanese architects was emerging through the crevices of the previous establishment and flourishing.

## Architecture for the Twenty-First Century

*Society is undergoing shifts that are far more pragmatic and radical than we even imagine, so I harbor no frustrations concerning such a development, nor do I even think to despair over it. I have, therefore, but one interest: the question of whether architecture as architecture is feasible in such times.*

—Toyo Ito<sup>3</sup>



fig. 1



fig. 2

demn their supposed indifference to local values; or, as lately, outright blame them for the upsurge in distended skylines across contemporary metropolises.<sup>50</sup> More pointedly, one could say that any star system tends to trap its protagonists in formulaic and predictable responses to any given demand. Out of conviction for personal style, many starchitects repeat formal and technical models while remaining indifferent to the context in which they are intervening. And while they may celebrate distinctive individualism on a global scale, at home their popularity, and corresponding cultivation of an uncritical following, often contributes to a lack of architectural diversity and even hinders the flourishing of new talent.<sup>51</sup>

The constellation of architects that eventually diverged from mainstream architecture in Japan, and now gravitates around Ito and Sejima, testifies to a different scenario. Ito, in particular, exemplifies at once an ethic of public responsibility and an unparalleled virtuosity, having responded to diverse challenges with a variety of architectural languages, thereby opening the field to new positions. As the Pritzker Prize committee wrote of Ito on its website, “It is evident that while innovating and pushing the boundaries of architecture forward, he does not close the road behind him.”<sup>52</sup> Of course, when Japan’s star architects favor cross-fertilization and cross-generational mutual support that move beyond mere competition and self-aggrandizement, they are observing a Japanese tradition that maintains as essential mutual respect between master and disciple. Yet, it must be noted that, by returning to the avant-garde values described earlier, these architects have also reverted to a notion of collective endeavor in which the desire to impact society supersedes singular will. That these aspirations were reciprocally reinforced—as exemplified by prominent figures like Ito consistently praising younger colleagues and paving the way for their achievements<sup>53</sup>—surely allowed these architects to continue wedding vigorous aesthetic exploits with both a profound architectural integrity and a renewed sense of social responsibility.

The potential difference between a star system and a constellation is that in the latter major and emerging stars are tied by gravitational pulls that render their aggregation of interests recognizable, if partially imagined. In contrast to shooting stars, single entities doomed to fade spectacularly, constellations evoke a very different image: each individual star, of course, carries its own significance, but so too does the stars’

### Another Kind of Architectural Star System

*To embody in architecture that which has never been architecture before—I wish to explore this possibility. The scales of space engendered by the natural environment. The liberating feeling of a landscape extending seemingly forever, the vastness of the sky, the lightness of the sky, the lightness of a cloud, the fineness of rain drops.*

—Junya Ishigami<sup>48</sup>

In the early twentieth century, like-minded artists disposed to upset social conventions and produce radical critiques of the period’s social transformations collectively formed avant-garde movements. The quest for personal artistic success came as an afterthought, if it emerged at all. By the end of the century, however, the art market, and the dramatically increased financial value of individual works of art, incentivized artists to pursue solo careers, and their concomitant rewards, and led to the appropriation of the formal accomplishments of successive avant-garde programs. In parallel, the artist’s newfound creative autonomy from everyday needs buried art’s commitment to social change.

In the world of architecture, which from the 1980s onward embraced neoconservative politics and the free-market economy, these developments converged in a newly formed “star system.” The term, imported from the Hollywood studio system, refers to a group of globally praised professionals that replaced the avant-garde. And even if, much like the term “starchitect,” the designation has many detractors—namely among those who meet the definition—the classification has become usual currency and, consequently, an effective tool to analyze contemporary architectural production.<sup>49</sup>

For one, the celebrity status of architects is not historically unprecedented. Also, contrary to the instant fame of many contemporary media celebrities, the recognition of today’s internationally acclaimed architects emerged from concrete achievements. Most of those who are now called “starchitects” have, on account of hard-won technical aptitude, led long careers and made important contributions to their profession, often developing idiosyncratic and influential architectural visions. Their success is typically well-deserved; but, like a double-edged sword, it can also attract hasty attacks. Criticism of today’s starchitects tends to reprimand their share of important international projects; con-

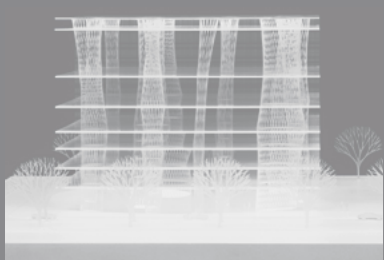


fig. 5



fig. 6

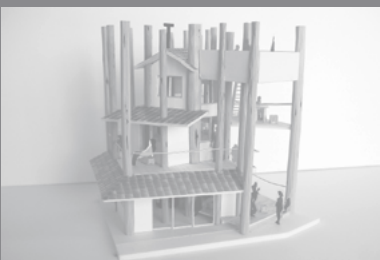


fig. 7

Fig. 5: Toyo Ito (Japanese, born 1941), Sendai Mediatheque, Miyagi, Japan, 1995–2001. Scale model 1:150, acrylic, 10 5/8 × 31 1/2 × 29 1/8" (27 × 80 × 74 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of the architect in honor of Philip Johnson. Fig. 6: Junya Ishigami (Japanese, born 1974), Balloon, 2006–07. Aluminum truss, 24 × 42 × 46" (730 × 1,280 × 1,400 cm). Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo. Fig. 7: Sou Fujimoto (Japanese, born 1971), Akhisa Hirata (Japanese, born 1971), Kuniko Inui (Japanese, born 1969), and Toyo Ito (Japanese, born 1941), Home-for-All, Rikuzentakata, Japan. Scale model 1:50, 2012. Polystyrene board, 8 1/16 × 7 1/2 × 6 1/16" (22 × 19 × 17 cm). Collection Akhisa Hirata Architecture Office

terministic spatial organizations.<sup>39</sup> Ito has offered that Sejima’s conceptual freedom “liberated from social conventions and restrictions” gave her “greater insight into social realities.”<sup>40</sup>

Architects such as Fujimoto and Ishigami have been similarly praised for their architectural commitment to both radical aesthetics and the production of social change. Fujimoto’s work has been described as taking “the elements of architecture apart,” only to reassemble them in a leisurely yet critical commentary on privacy in contemporary society.<sup>41</sup> And while Ishigami’s architectural quests may seem obsessive and focused almost exclusively on abstract disciplinary issues, he counts on users and their experiential sense of wonder to render meaningful his artistic endeavors.

Ito has described his aesthetic pursuits as a search for “places that are free of institutional constraints.” He has strived not only to probe “the meaning of public buildings” but also to interrogate “the excessive importance architects attach to expression.” Convinced that local governments and architects conceived architecture “according to a manual and with little consideration of the people who use them,” he realized that “the social significance of architecture [needed] to be reconsidered.”<sup>42</sup> Ito displaced the discipline’s emphasis on design, preferring instead to attend to audience reception—as he did with Sendai Mediatheque—thereby shifting the inflection of his work. Sendai was a manifesto against what Ito has called “ready-made ideas,” but it was also indicative of the “struggle between the respect for a powerful idea and all technical constraints and legal regulations.”<sup>43</sup> In parallel, while Ito’s architectural ideas constituted the fundamental driving force in overcoming constraints and captivating people, his design approach increasingly relied on his discussions with residents, local communities, and clients—that is to say, on those who would in fact be using the buildings.<sup>44</sup>

The 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake only reinforced this changing attitude. In the wake of the disaster, architects in Japan developed a new consciousness, recognizing that their work must extend beyond the immediate urban context and support emergent social needs. As Ito described it, architecture should move “beyond delight,” “refrain from criticism,” and seek “self-effacement.”<sup>45</sup> And yet, the 2012 Venice Biennale Golden Lion winning project, Home-for-All—in which Ito together with SANAA, Fujimoto, Hirata, and other architects created simple, lodge-like structures in rural areas, enabling residents of temporary housing to gather for meetings and social events—retained an experimental edge.<sup>46</sup> It pointed to contemporary Japanese architecture’s ability to maintain an avant-garde attitude in face of everyday requirements,<sup>47</sup> and confirmed that in Japan’s network of established and emerging architectural luminaries, shared core values superseded individual interests.

architectural space, were presented by the architects as a rational and inescapable legitimation for design decisions in which aesthetic intuition, not to say dubious notions of beauty, no longer played a role.<sup>30</sup> After this broader, international diagrammatic turn—and the faux pragmatism that ensued from it—few architects would dare say they sought only to make beautiful buildings.

Yet, this is precisely how Ito has described some of his more important projects. Of the Sendai Mediatheque he has said that he wanted “to create tubes of light so blindingly beautiful it would be difficult to tell if they were structural.”<sup>31</sup> Reemerging alongside Ito’s own approach to diagrammatic design was a notion of architectural experience tied to aesthetic impact—to the tactile and, in Ito’s words, the “enjoyable” reception of new kinds of space.<sup>32</sup> What for Ito had begun as a kind of withdrawal from the contemporary city, or an “ideological refusal of [its] obnoxious banality,” as he has also called it, soon turned into a conceptual investigation of architecture that, while refusing formalism, celebrated “the discovery of a new urban reality” in aesthetic terms.<sup>33</sup>

In any case, an architecture that reflects changing urban contexts need rely on more than superficial effects. As Ito recognized early in his career, in a society decidedly “pre-packaged and hermetically sealed,” architecture risks turning into a fiction, with architects “beautifully [visualizing] the wrapping rather than [attempting] to make the content look real.”<sup>34</sup> Ito’s radical aesthetic, common also to Sejima’s early works, took inspiration from generic building types, such as the convenience store, whose hierarchical and uniform spaces he would then overturn, positing changed social organizations and novel perceptual experiences.<sup>35</sup> Ito married a dramatic sense of beauty with a commitment to respond to new social needs and modes of spatial consumption.

Remarkably, Ito’s pledge to both aesthetics and ethics accompanied his return to core aspects of the architectural discipline. The centrality of structure to Ito’s work following Sendai—be it in his use of exoskeletons to define a building’s image or his interest in interiors derived from complex geometries<sup>36</sup>—was soon matched by Sejima’s and later SANAA’s profound questioning of established functionalist blueprints, their innovative organization of clients’ needs, and their sophisticated use of materials such as glass and metal. Architecture in Japan would from then on leave behind languages based on signs and symbols, and with them, any simplistic version of architectural beauty. Although terms such as *kawaii* (cute) have been used in analyses of contemporary Japanese architecture,<sup>37</sup> such descriptions, as with characterizations founded on the structures’ apparent simplicity, are profoundly misleading when considering the built achievements of SANAA.<sup>38</sup> The firm’s aesthetic feats, beyond their defining lightness and effortlessness, have been described as “inclusive” and “democratic,” owing to their innovative, nonde-



collective arrangement; their relative proximities and distances, and their combined brilliance, suggest more than a sum of parts. Since ancient times, constellations have offered direction to those looking to the skies for guidance.

One certainly hopes that the lightness celebrated in the work of this particular constellation of architects begets a legacy that surpasses its formal and material tropes.<sup>54</sup> The material transparency and elegant fluidity emanating from their work demands appreciation to be sure; but, even more so does the belief they uphold in architecture's ability to alter cultural perceptions and induce social change for the better.<sup>55</sup> This they do with what can only be deemed a graceful lightness of being as they avoid dogmatic manifestos and egotism. Amid the glimmer and incandescence of their aesthetic pursuits, this particular constellation of Japanese architects offers an ethical reference to the world of architecture at large. Beyond the fascination of appearances, this is why their work should remain influential.

Tokyo, July 2015

## Notes

- 1 Osku Pajamaki quoted in Robin Pogrebin and Doreen Carvajal, "Guggenheim Helsinki Unveils Design," *New York Times*, June 24, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/24/arts/design/guggenheim-helsinki-unveils-design.html>.
- 2 Ibid. As critic Anna Kats put it, while the Guggenheim had "typically opted for monumental, single buildings to house its global network of institutions," in this instance the architects offered "a complex that consists of fragmented structures that hold urbanism at its core." See Anna Kats, "Guggenheim Helsinki's Winning Design Reacts against Guggenheim's Past," *Blouin Artinfo*, June 23, 2015, <http://www.blouinartinfo.com/news/story/1185096/guggenheim-helsinkis-winning-design-reacts-against>.
- 3 Toyo Ito, "A New Architecture Is Possible Only in the Sea of Consumption," in *From Postwar to Postmodern, Art in Japan 1945–1989: Primary Documents*, ed. Doryun Chong, Michio Hayashi, Kenji Kajiya, and Fumihiko Sumitomo, trans. Maiko Behr (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2012), 358. Essay first published in 1989 as "Shōni no umi ni hitarazu shite atarashii kenchiku wa nai," in *Shinkenchiku* 64, no. 11 (November 1989): 201–4.
- 4 For an account of such exchanges, see Evelyn Schulz, "Beyond Modernism," in *Future Living: Community Living in Japan*, ed. Claudia Hildner (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2013), 11–27.
- 5 Rem Koolhaas remarks that Japan was the first non-Western country to host an architectural avant-garde. For Koolhaas, Metabolism represented globalization's capacity to rearrange "architectural areas of initiative" and signaled "the end of the Western hegemony" as purveyor of the ideal city. See Rem Koolhaas, interview by Andrew Mackenzie, "Batik, Biennale and the Death of the Skyscraper: Interview with Rem Koolhaas," in *Architectural Review*, February 24, 2014, <http://www.architectural-review.com/view/batik-biennale-and-the-death-of-the-skyscraper-interview-with-rem-koolhaas>.
- 6 For an analysis of Ito's embrace of ephemerality as a response to Tokyo's "metropolitan non-contexts," see Andrea Maffei, "Toyo Ito, the Works," in *Toyo Ito: Works, Projects, Writings*, ed. Andrea Maffei (Milano: Electa, 2002), 9.
- 7 See for instance Kenneth Frampton, "Tadao Ando's Critical Modernism," in *Tadao Ando: Buildings, Projects, Writings* (New York: Rizzoli, 1984), 6–9.
- 8 Tange and Maki were awarded the Pritzker Architecture Prize in 1987 and 1993 respectively; Ando would follow soon after, in 1995. Between 2010 and 2014, four of the prize's laureates were Japanese: Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa (as SANAA), Ito, and Ban.
- 9 Ito, "A New Architecture Is Possible Only in the Sea of Consumption," 357. Ito continues, "The quick pace of society, or rather the sudden circulation of capital, has swept up almost every architect. . . . The issue has now become a question not of whether we can reject consumer society and still survive, but of whether we understand how completely we must break free of the idea that architecture alone can exist outside of consumption."
- 10 Although Ito studied under the influence of Metabolist architects Tange, Kiyonori Kikutake (born 1928), and Isozaki, he also recognizes his debt to Kazuo Shinohara's (born 1925) writings on "inner utopia." Ito confessed his disappointment with the Metabolists' contributions to the 1970 World Exposition in Osaka, noting how society often overtakes architecture's ideal visions of society. Toyo Ito, interview by Terunobu Fujimori, "In Pursuit of Truth under Changing Circumstances: Terunobu Fujimori and Toyo Ito," in

Toyo Ito, *Toyo Ito 1971–2001*, trans. Hiroshi Watanabe (Tokyo: Toto, 2014), 15.

- 11 Ito, "A New Architecture Is Possible Only in the Sea of Consumption," 358.
- 12 See Charles Jencks, "Toyo Ito: Stealth Fighter for a Richer Post-Modernism," in *Toyo Ito*, Architectural Monographs 41 (London: Academy Editions, 1995).
- 13 Toyo Ito, interview by Toto Gallery staff members, "Sendai Mediatheque—Conversation with Toyo Ito," in Toyo Ito, *Toyo Ito 1971–2001*, trans. Hiroshi Watanabe (Tokyo: Toto, 2014), 265.
- 14 Philip Johnson and Mark Wigley, *Deconstructivist Architecture* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1988).
- 15 Jencks, "Toyo Ito: Stealth Fighter for a Richer Post-Modernism," 11.
- 16 Toyo Ito, "Toyo Ito: Designboom Interview," *Designboom*, March 25, 2013, interview conducted in 2001, <http://www.designboom.com/architecture/toyo-ito-designboom-interview>.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Toyo Ito, "Preface," in Toyo Ito, *Toyo Ito 1971–2001*, trans. Hiroshi Watanabe (Tokyo: Toto, 2014), 3.
- 21 Ito, "A New Architecture Is Possible Only in the Sea of Consumption," 358.
- 22 Yuko Hasegawa, "An Architecture of Awareness for the Twenty-First Century," in *Kazuyo Sejima + Ryue Nishizawa / SANAA*, ed. Yuko Hasegawa (Milan: Electa, 2005), 12.
- 23 Toyo Ito, "Mediatheque/Library," in Dana Buntrock, Taro Igarashi, Toyo Ito, Riken Yamamoto, *Toto Ito* (London: Phaidon, 2009), 133.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Sou Fujimoto, "In Conversation: Sou Fujimoto with Julia Peyton-Jones and Hans Ulrich Obrist," in *Sou Fujimoto: Serpentine Pavilion 2013*, ed. Sophie O'Brien (London: Walther König, 2013), 27.
- 26 Friedrich Meschede, "Reflections on Architecture, Space and Their Metaphors in the Work of Sou Fujimoto," in *Sou Fujimoto, Futuropective Architecture*, ed. Friedrich Meschede (Bielefeld: Kunsthalle Bielefeld / Koln: Walther König, 2012), 351.
- 27 Against a typically modern idea of "infinitely-expanding, homogeneous space," Hirata defends complexity and proposes "the need to consider the problem of architecture in light of the nature of the living world." See Akihisa Hirata, "Introduction," in *Akihisa Hirata: Tangling* (Tokyo: Inax, 2011), 9.
- 28 Taro Igarashi has suggested that Ishigami's initial interest in the domain of visual art emerged not only because young Japanese architects had difficulty finding work after the implosion of the 1980s asset-price bubble economy but also because Ishigami believes in an idea of architecture as utopia. As architectural commissions in Japan grew ever more conservative and less adventurous, Ishigami sought in temporary installations another type of architecture. Progressively, however, he was able to redirect his efforts toward concrete, permanent architectural designs. See Taro Igarashi, "A Few Things I Know about Junya Ishigami," in *Junya Ishigami—Another Scale of Architecture*, ed. Chinatsu Kuma (Kyoto: Seigensha Art Publishing, 2010), 270–89.
- 29 Koji Taki, "Architecture Is No Longer 'Architecture': Water Cube—Sendai Mediatheque and Beyond," in *Toyo Ito*, ed. Andrea Maffei (Milano: Electa, 2002), 19.
- 30 See Pedro Gadanho, "Hype(r)scapes," in *Post Rotterdam, Architecture and City after Tabula Rasa*, ed. Pedro Gadanho (Rotterdam: O10 Publishers, 2001), published on the occasion of an exhibition of the same name organized for the Porto 2001 European Capital of Culture, in Porto, Portugal.
- 31 Ito, "Sendai Mediatheque—Conversation with Toyo Ito," 265.

- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Ito, "A New Architecture Is Possible Only in the Sea of Consumption," 359.
- 34 Toyo Ito, "Architecture in a Simulated City," in *Toyo Ito*, Architectural Monographs 41 (London: Academy Editions, 1995), 9.
- 35 For Ito, the Sendai project departed radically from the conventional design of public buildings: its innovative spatial "uniformity" departed from the commonplace grid. As Ito pointed out, "the space can accommodate any activity anywhere, but places within that space are differentiated by the tubes." See Ito, "Sendai Mediatheque—Conversation with Toyo Ito," 263.
- 36 As Ito confesses, he became aware of structure with Sendai: "I began to feel that diverse things could be done with 'structure.' In addition, the memory capacity of computers became huge right around the time of Sendai, making it possible to computer analyse anything." See Toyo Ito, in conversation with Terunobu Fujimori, "The Power of Architecture," in *Toyo Ito 2002–2014*, trans. Hiroshi Watanabe (Tokyo: Toto, 2015), 13.
- 37 See Taro Igarashi, "Superflat Architecture and Japanese Subculture," in *Japan, towards Totalscape: Contemporary Japanese Architecture, Urban Planning and Landscape*, ed. Moriko Kira and Mariko Terada (Rotterdam: Nai Publishers, 2000), 98–101.
- 38 As the 2010 jury citation on the Pritzker Architecture Prize website states, "The buildings by Sejima and Nishizawa seem deceptively simple," but in fact "explore like few others the phenomenal properties of continuous space, lightness, transparency, and materiality to create a subtle synthesis." See <http://www.pritzkerprize.com/2010/jury>. Similarly, Hasegawa posits, "It is difficult to analyze the complexity, ambiguity and looseness concealed in the simplicity of SANAA's architecture. . . . To understand how they explore unknown fields liberated from conventional architectural concepts, it would be far more interesting to examine how their architectural works are used over a period of time." See Hasegawa, "An Architecture of Awareness for the Twenty-First Century," 7.
- 39 The 2010 Pritzker Prize jury citation remarks that the architects' "equivalence of spaces" gives way to the creation of "unpretentious, democratic buildings according to the task and budget at hand." See <http://www.pritzkerprize.com/2010/jury>.
- 40 Toyo Ito, quoted in Hasegawa, "An Architecture of Awareness for the Twenty-First Century," 7.
- 41 Niklas Maak, "On Sou Fujimoto," in *Sou Fujimoto: Serpentine Pavilion 2013*, ed. Sophie O'Brien (London: Walther König, 2013), 52.
- 42 Toyo Ito, interview by Toto Gallery staff members, "Home-for-All—Conversation with Toyo Ito," in Toyo Ito, *Toyo Ito 2002–2014*, trans. Hiroshi Watanabe (Tokyo: Toto, 2015), 321.
- 43 Ito, "Sendai Mediatheque—Conversation with Toyo Ito," 264.
- 44 Toyo Ito, interview by Designboom, "Interview with Architect Toyo Ito," *Designboom*, June 16, 2015, <http://www.designboom.com/architecture/toyo-ito-interview-06-16-2015>.
- 45 Even a project such as the Toyo Ito Museum of Architecture, Imabari, is born from a desire to educate, a role for which in Japan Ito is highly recognized, more than he is for self-aggrandizement. See Ito, "The Power of Architecture," 41.
- 46 Ito points out that the architects not only designed shared houses for local communities; they also rallied support to finance and build the projects. See Ito, "Interview with Architect Toyo Ito."
- 47 As Eve Blau, a professor of urban form and design at Harvard University, recalls of SANAA's 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, in Kanazawa. "When it opened, the [museum] was celebrated as a new kind of

- cultural institution in Japan in which high art and daily life mix." But Blau asserts that this synthesis has deep roots in traditional Japanese culture, one that no doubt forms a substantial part of the fascination Western audiences hold toward Japanese architecture. See Blau, "Inventing New Hierarchies," Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa, 2010 Laureates, on the Pritzker Prize for Architecture website, 2010, <http://www.pritzkerprize.com/2010/essay>.
- 48 See Ishigami, "Another Scale of Architecture," 4.
- 49 See, for example, Davide Ponzini and Michele Nastasi, *Starchitecture: Scenes, Actors and Spectacles in Contemporary Cities* (Turin and New York: Allemandi, 2011).
- 50 See Witold Rybczynski, "The Franchising of Architecture," *New York Times*, June 11, 2014, <http://tmagazine.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/06/11/gehry-norman-foster-moshe-safdie-starchitects-locatects-franchising-of-architecture>. See also the debate that followed: "Are the 'Star' Architects Ruining Cities?," with contributions by Allison Arieff, Vishaan Chakrabarti, and others, in the *New York Times*, July 28, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2014/07/28/the-star-architects-ruining-cities-9>.
- 51 I have reflected on this subject previously when considering the influence of starchitect Álvaro Siza Vieira on his contemporaries. See Pedro Gadanho, "Under the Influence: From Volcano to Gene Pool," in *Kortárs portugál építészet / Contemporary Portuguese Architecture*, ed. Zorán Vukoszávlyev and Szentirmai Tamás (Budapest: TERC, 2010), 313–17.
- 52 As Lord Peter Palumbo, Alejandro Aravena, Juhani Pallasmaa, and others said of Ito in his Pritzker Prize citation, Ito's work contains a "spectrum of architectural languages." His idea that "different circumstances lead to different answers," as well as his lack of adherence to particular formal trends, reflect the openness in his approach. Ito, according to the committee, "is a pioneer and encourages others to benefit from his discoveries and for them to advance in their own directions as well. In that sense, he is a true master who produces oxygen rather than just consumes it." See, "Jury Citation," Toyo Ito, 2013 Laureate, Pritzker Prize for Architecture website, <http://www.pritzkerprize.com/2013/jury-citation>.
- 53 This attitude is one that Ito himself inherited from his masters. In an interview conducted by Toto Gallery staff members, the staff refer to Arata Isozaki (born 1931) as belonging to an older generation that "provides opportunities for work to younger architects" and praise this type of intergenerational relationship as one "that allows mutual criticism but also provides opportunities to help and to be helped." See Toyo Ito, interview by Toto Gallery staff members, "First Public Buildings—Conversation with Toyo Ito," in Toyo Ito, *Toyo Ito 1971–2001* (Tokyo: Toto, 2014), 177.
- 54 Deyan Sudjic has described the notion of lightness in the work of SANAA as standing "against the massive, and the rhetorical, in architecture." Much as Ito's interest in "lightweight ephemeral structures" is a response to social impermanence, SANAA's lightness is more a material characteristic. For Sudjic, this lightness filters "architecture of all its excess baggage, by reducing building to a distilled essence." See Sudjic, "The Lightness of Being," in *Kazuyo Sejima + Ryue Nishizawa / SANAA: The Zollverein School of Management and Design*, ed. Kristin Feireiss (Munich and London: Prestel, 2005), 50.
- 55 Writing on the work of Fujimoto and Japan's renewed belief in architecture's power to change society, Niklas Maak optimistically forecasts the end of a "depressing phase in architectural history—when architects justified their well-tempered unimaginativeness by claiming that architectural utopias had only brought misery to cities and their inhabitants." See Maak, "On Sou Fujimoto," 56.

## To Create Architecture that Breathes

I prefer soft objects to hard, curved lines to straight, ambiguity to clarity, spatial diversity to functionalism, and naturalness to artificiality. Humans came out of caves or climbed down from trees and created architecture using geometry. It was considered a human virtue to create geometric order in a naturally chaotic world. Ever since, architecture has been received and appreciated as distinct from nature. The same is true of the body. Humans believe that the beautiful body is separate from nature, a perfectly proportional form to be inscribed in circles and squares. The body, however, is connected to nature through the eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. Humans used to live by rivers and absorb their taintless water as if part of a stemming stream branch. Humans were part of nature. Ecology and sustainability are gaining importance today. It is evident that architecture must be part of nature, not separate from it. Most modern architecture is composed of euclidean geometry, although there is no perpendicular grid in the natural world. Branched trees display angles of varying degrees, for example, but no branch intersects precisely at a perpendicular. Trees merely repeat a simple rule of branching, and yet they are able to produce complicated forms that fit comfortably within the natural environment. Today we are able to create architecture based on the rules in the natural world by using computer technologies. However, we should use these rules not to make forms that imitate nature but instead to create architecture that breathes and is congruous with the environment.

Toyo Ito



Sendai, a sleek, cubic structure, combines a multimedia hub, library, and information-services center for the audiovisually impaired. Interior walls are eliminated to allow for a fluid space that departs from the typical uniformity of the flat-slab-and-column construction of modern architecture. Thirteen tube-like columns support a stack of lean 538-square-foot (50-square-meter) steel floor plates. Each structural tube is an open latticework of steel that is torqued to resist building stresses and changes in cross section between floors. The dissolution of the structural columns into reticulated, lightweight forms allows each, in addition to providing support, either to carry air-conditioning and power conduits; serve as a

light well; or hold vertical circulation. The facade's double layer of glass acts as a mediated surface: by day, it fluctuates between reflection and translucency; by night, it dissolves against the illuminated building. Envisioned during the early design phase as a pliable structure of "soft tubes that wav[e] slowly under water" and "rubber tubes filled with fluid,"<sup>1</sup> the building's remarkable transparency is, in the architect's words, encountered "like a Japanese garden, where space comes into being as the sum total of the sequences experienced by a person walking through it."<sup>2</sup>—Phoebe Springstubb



Aerial view of the southeast corner

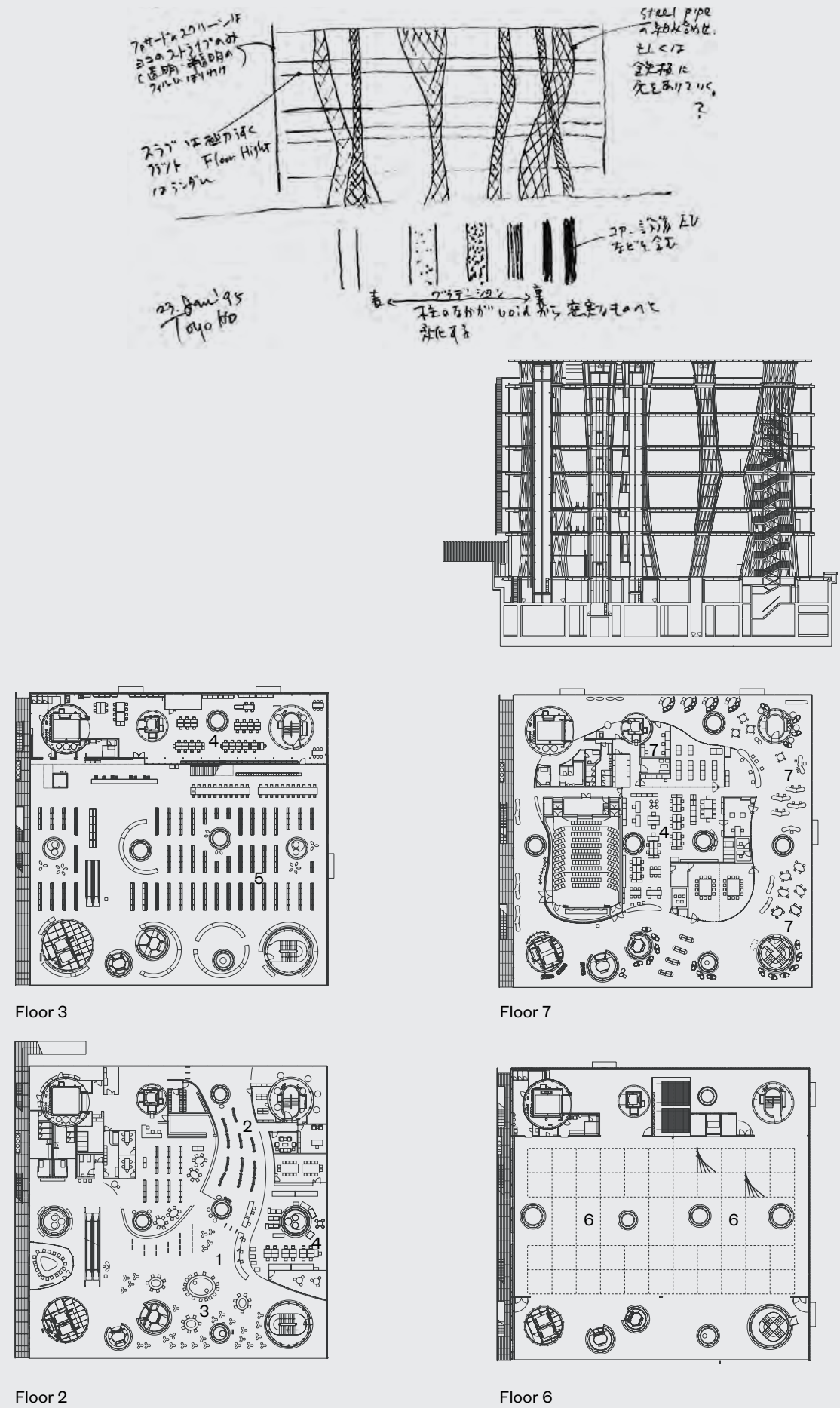


Previous spread: South facade from Jozenji-dori  
Above: Detail of the south facade

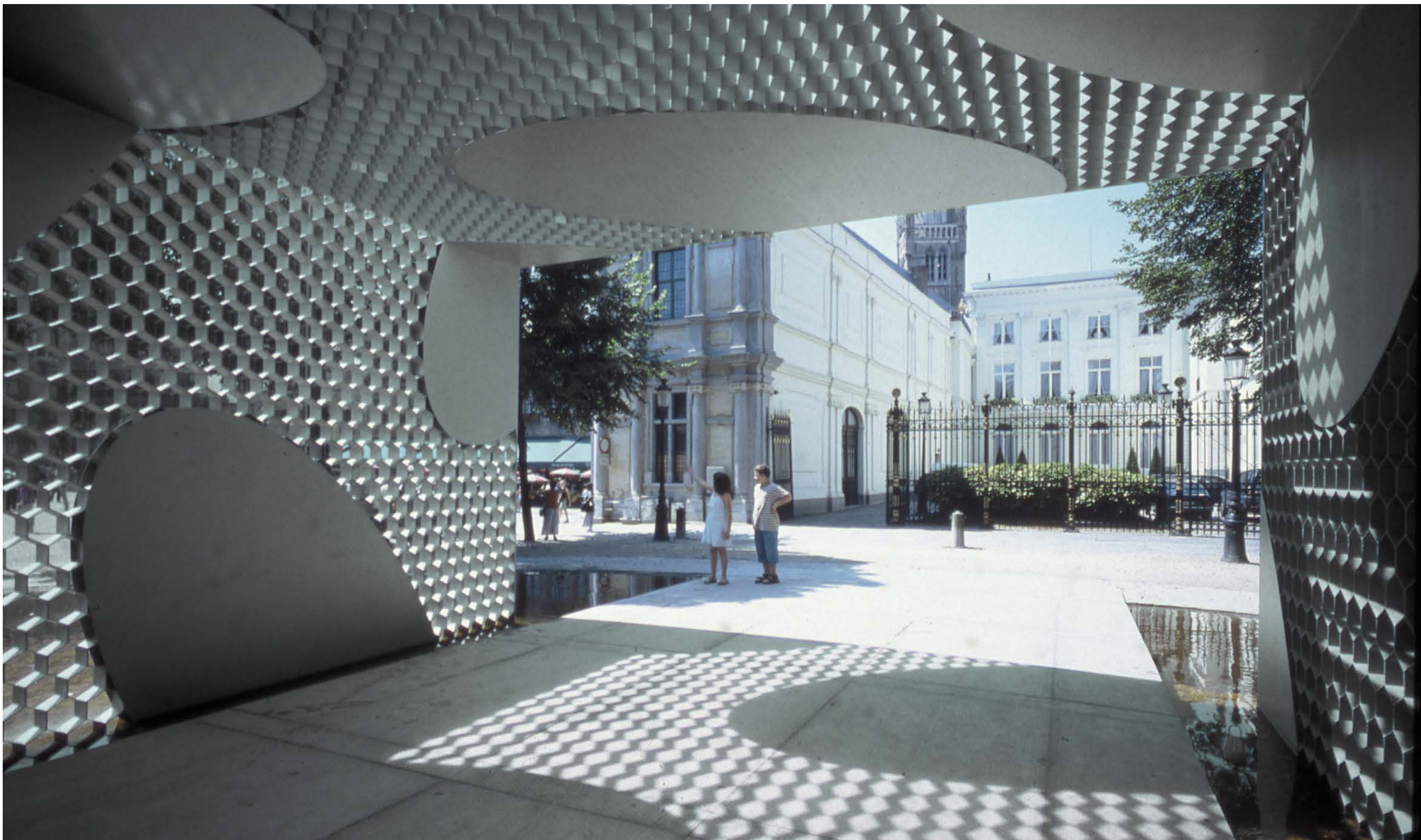
1. Toyo Ito, "Three Transparencies," in *Toyo Ito: Works, Projects, Writings*, ed. Andrea Maffei (Milan: Electa, 2002), 346. First published in Toyo Ito, *Suké Suké*, trans. Alfred Birbaurn (Tokyo: Nuno Nuno Books, 1997). 2. Toyo Ito, interview by Toto Gallery staff members, "Sendai Mediatheque—Conversation with Toyo Ito," in Toyo Ito, *Toyo Ito 1971–2001*, trans. Hiroshi Watanabe (Tokyo: Toto, 2014), 180.



From top: View upward into a tube. Second-floor newspaper- and magazine-browsing area

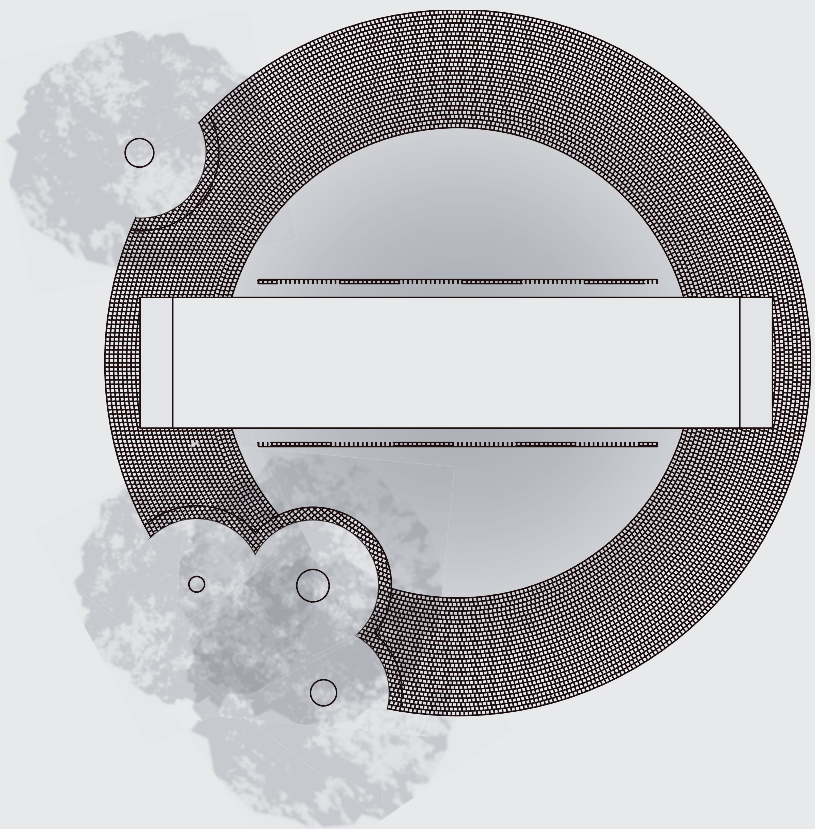
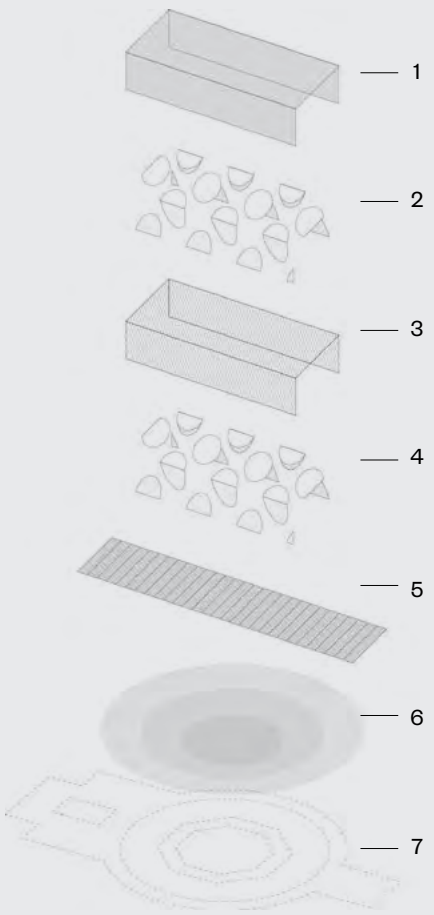


From top: Initial sketch proposing composition of structural tubes, 1995. East-west section. Plans of the second, third, sixth, and seventh floors with information center (1), audiovisual library (2), browsing (3), offices (4), library (5), gallery (6), and studio (7)



This contemporary folly was commissioned as a temporary project to commemorate the European Union's designation of Brugge as the 2002 European "capital of culture." The pavilion straddled an archaeological site containing the ruins of a medieval cathedral in the city's historic center. Lifted above a circular reflecting pool designed to protect the ruins, the pavilion's walls and roof were made of a lightweight aluminum panel folded over a sheet of polycarbonate that served as a bridge. The honeycomb pattern, insufficiently rigid on its own, was structurally reinforced by the application of large, flat ellipses that evoke the cutouts of Belgian lace. Taking an essentially decorative pattern as its generative motif, the

pavilion transformed the pattern through scale and material, forming a facade that was both structural and, with its filigreed aluminum, transparent—presence without mass. The open, honeycomb-shaped tessellations of the aluminum created a shifting perceptual experience that hid and revealed the cityscape in fragments as visitors passed through the pavilion. Reflective and ephemeral, the pavilion was a playful counterpoint to the surrounding masonry buildings. The light appearance mandated by the preservation of the historic site placed it in conversation with the existing architecture. Intended as a temporary project, the pavilion was disassembled in 2013.—PS



Clockwise from top right: Pavilion components: polycarbonate (1), aluminum plate (2), aluminum honeycomb (3), aluminum plate (4), floating bridge (5), pond (6), cathedral foundations (7). Aluminum honeycomb structure reinforced with surface panels. Plan. Sections



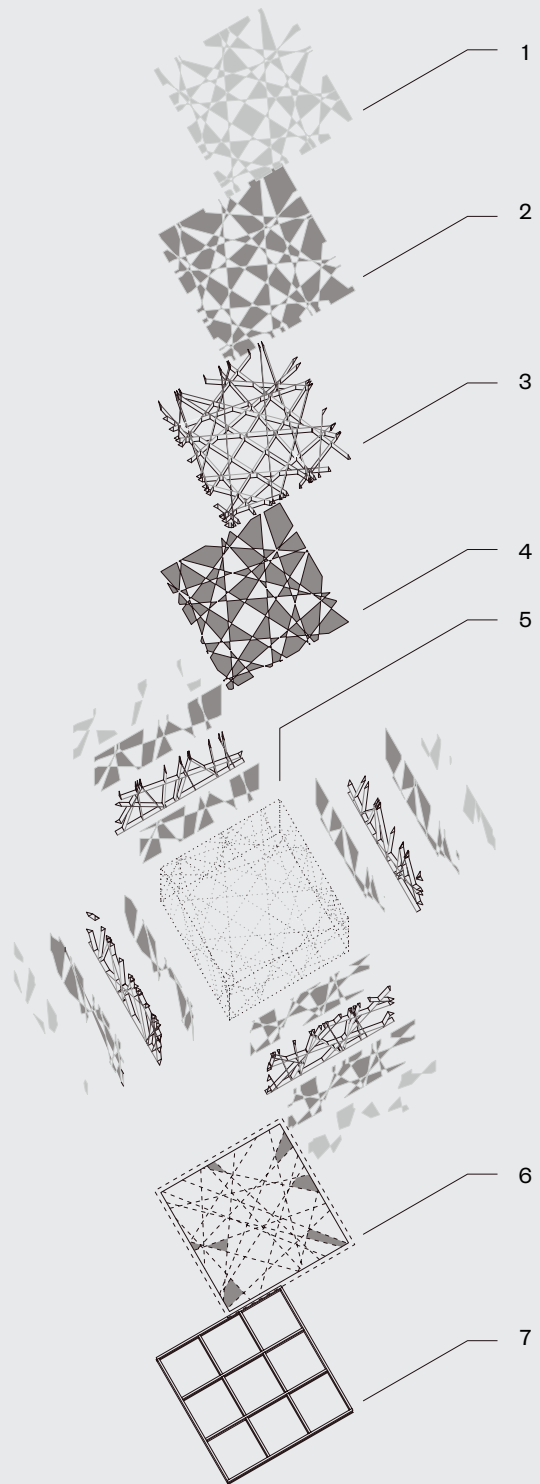
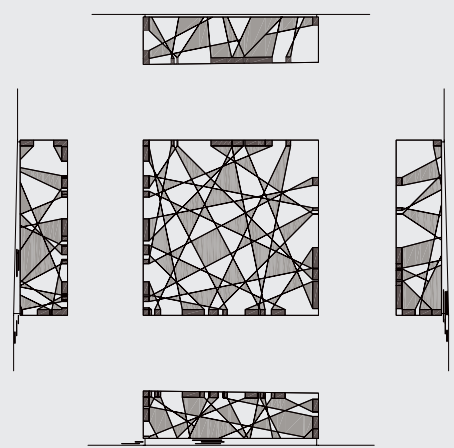
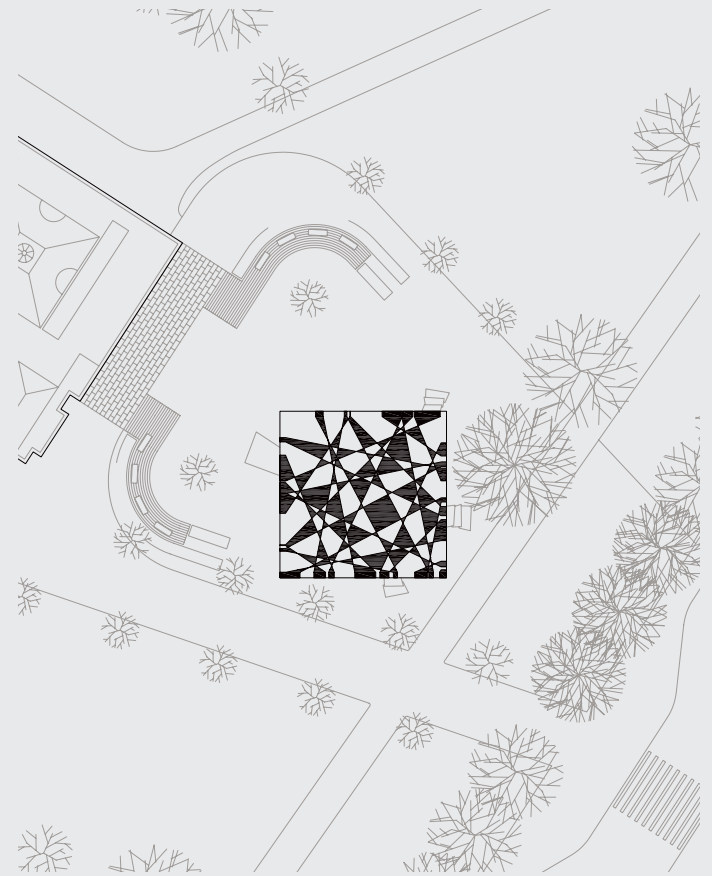
Previous spread: Interior view toward Burg Square  
From top: Exterior. Detail of surface panels at the interior





This dynamic structure is one of a series of temporary summer pavilions commissioned by the Serpentine Gallery since 2000 for Kensington Gardens. Developed in collaboration with the structural engineer Cecil Balmond, the design used an algorithm to distort an orthogonal grid, rotating and scaling a number of squares inscribed in a spiral to generate an unexpected, fractured form. The mathematical pattern flirted with the appearance of instability—a chaotic network of intersecting lines circumscribed by the box's perimeter forms the building envelope. Each line was translated into an element of the steel frame—intersections creating structural equilibrium. Fabricated out of a series of welded panels that

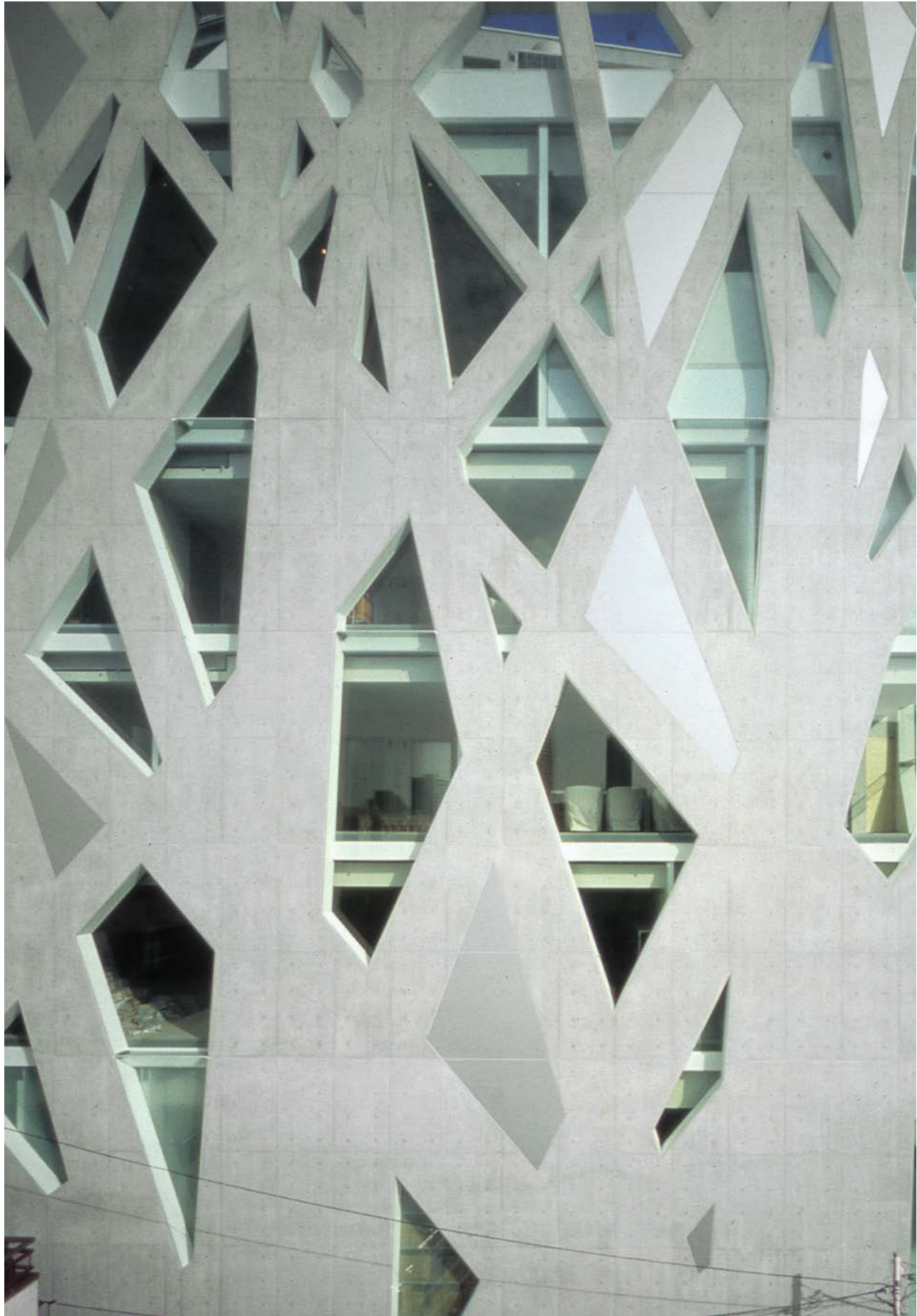
were bolted together on-site, the asymmetrical lattice of trapezoidal and triangular openings was fitted with alternating glass and aluminum panels and hosted a café along with event spaces for lectures and parties. With no discrete architectural components—columns, windows, or doors—the planes of walls, floor, and ceiling were identical patterned surfaces that boldly combined structure and figuration.—PS



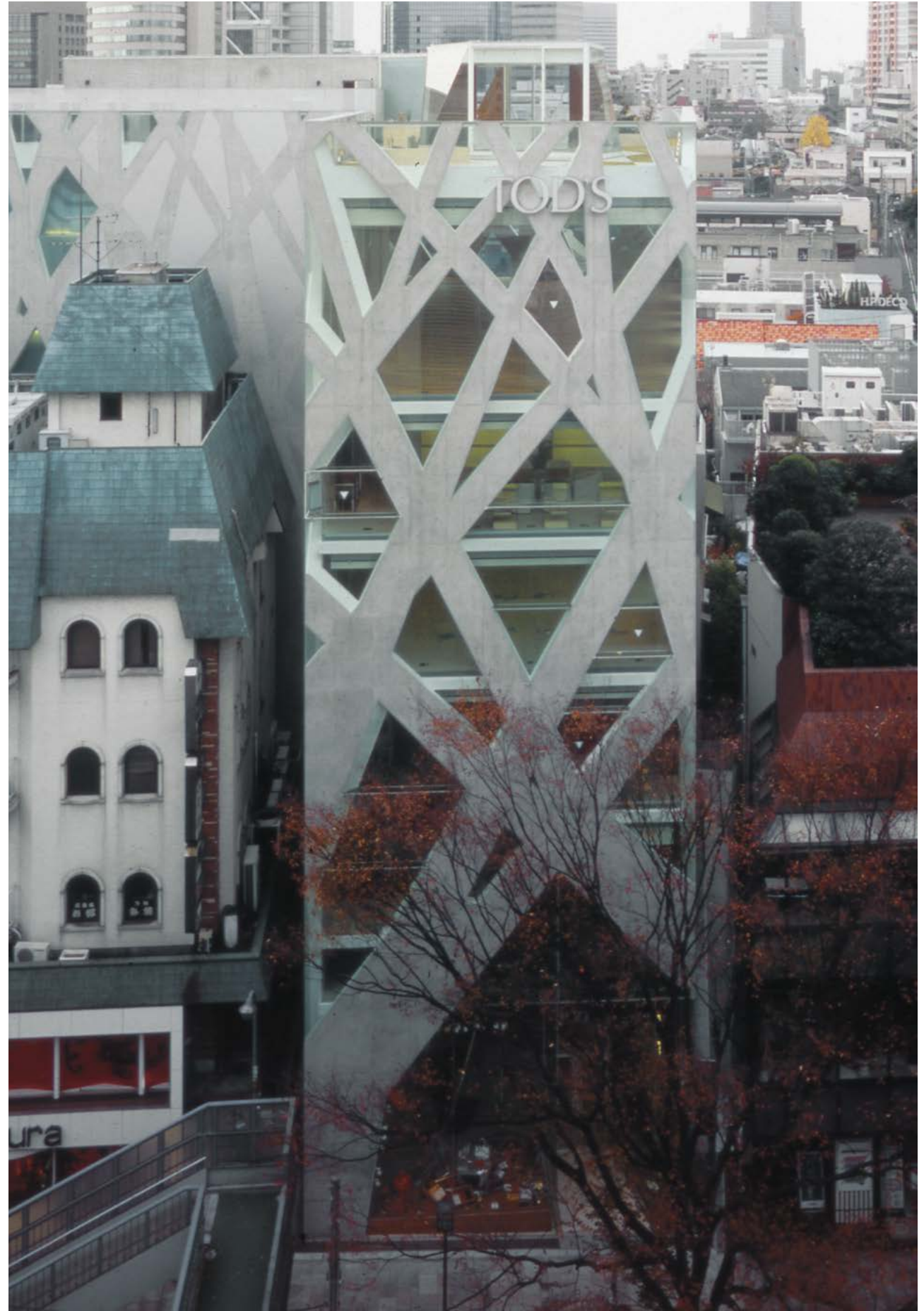
Clockwise from top right: Site plan. Reflected ceiling plan and sections. Pavilion components: glass (1), aluminum plates (2), grillage of flat steel bars (3), aluminum plates (4), café and event space (5), plywood floor (6), steel grillage and wooden joists (7)



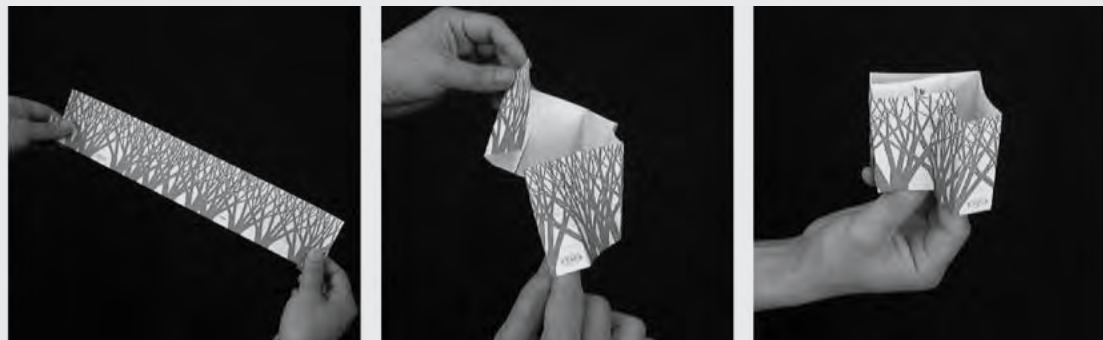
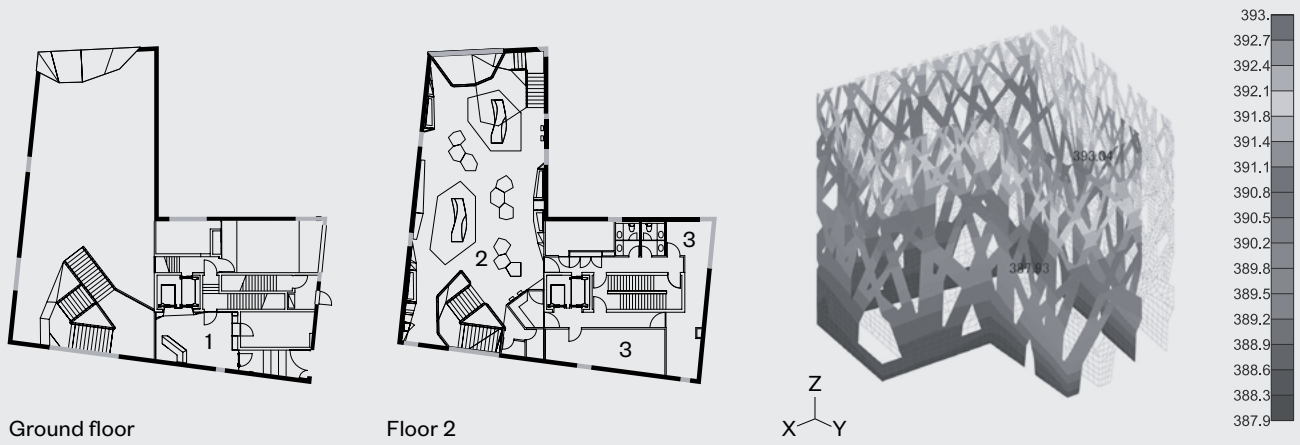
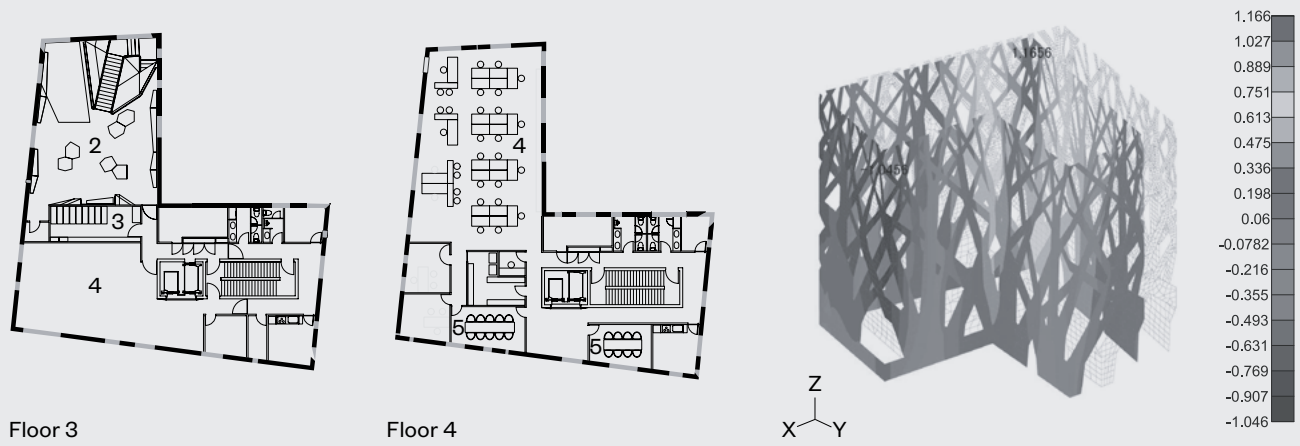
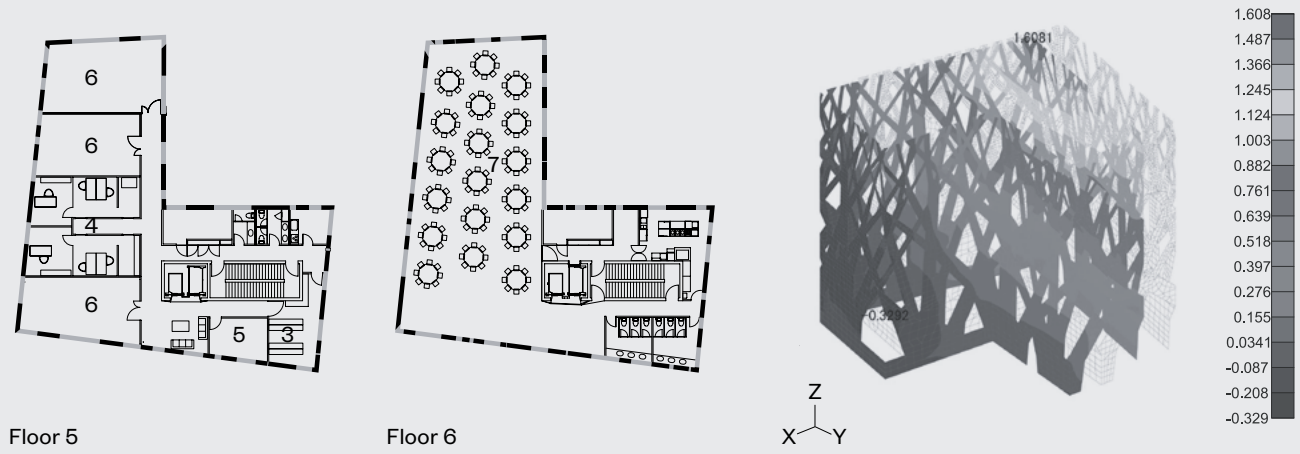
Previous spread: South facade with Serpentine Gallery  
From top: Café at interior. Detail of structural panels



This flagship store for shoe and handbag retailer Tod's is located on Omotesando, an avenue of luxury retailers that has evolved into a showcase for high-profile architecture since the early 2000s. To give continuity to the L-shaped site, which has only a narrow front on the commercial avenue, the building's facade was conceived as a continuous screen of interlocked concrete piers that evoke the neighborhood's allées of ornamental zelkova trees. The design merges a highly abstracted, graphic interpretation of nature with the logic of its structural system—bifurcated branches thicken to trunk-like piers according to the downward flow of forces acting on the building. The robust, approximately

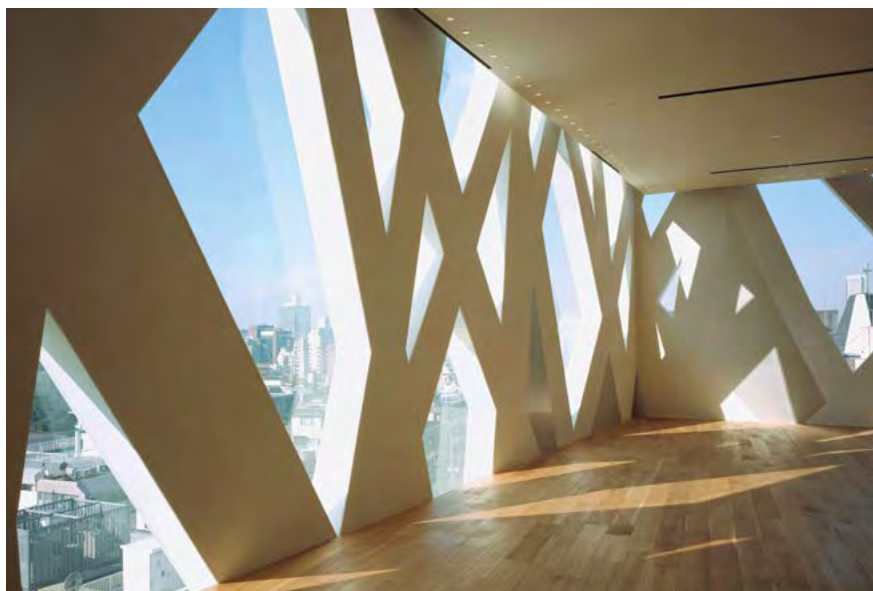
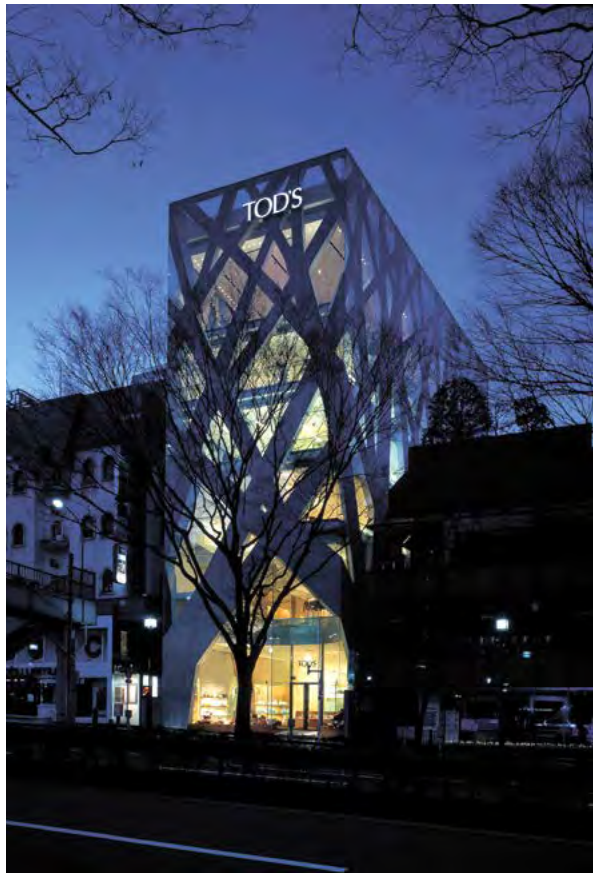


twelve-inch- (thirty-centimeter-) thick piers, broad at ground level, taper to intricate grillwork at the top of the seven-story building. By concentrating the load bearing in the facade, the shop interiors are freed of columns with retail spaces spanning thirty-three to forty-nine feet (ten to fifteen meters). Asymmetrical openings in frameless glass offer expansive street-level displays and multiple smaller openings for the offices at the upper floors. The exploration of nonlinear geometries creates an iconic structure compelled by what Ito has described as “a constant tension generated between the building's symbolic concreteness and its abstractness.”<sup>1</sup>—PS



Clockwise from top right: Structural analysis of seismic loading. Abstraction of the silhouettes of zelkova trees to create the structure. Plans of the ground through sixth floors with office entrance (1), shop (2), stock room (3), offices (4), meeting room (5), showroom (6), and party room (7)

1. "Tod's Omotesando Building," in "Toyo Ito 2001-2005: Beyond Modernism," special issue, *El Croquis* 123: 258.



Previous spread from left: Detail of the facade's branching concrete piers. Aerial view. Clockwise from top left: Night view from Omotesando Avenue. Staircase inside the shop. Sixth-floor interior

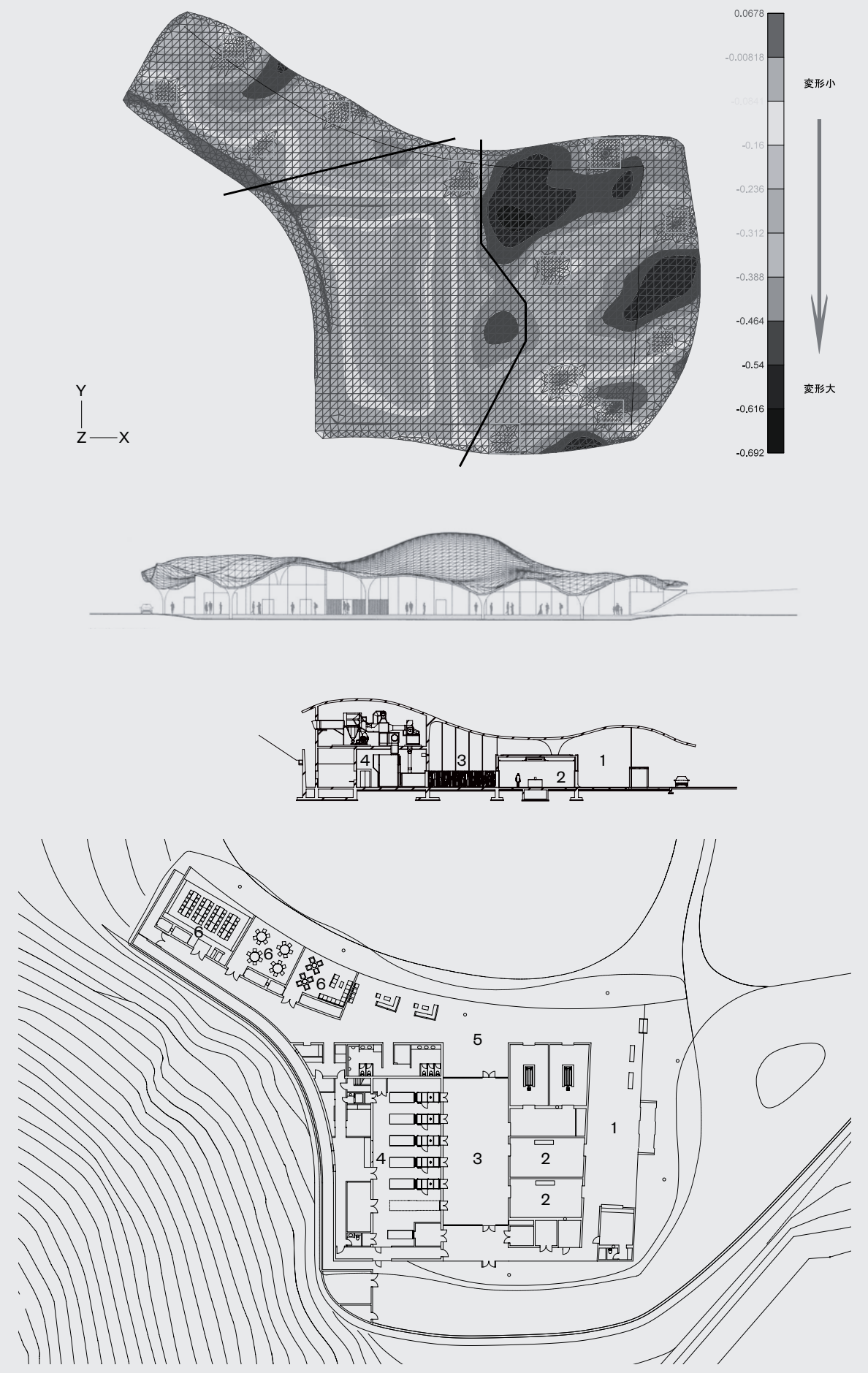


Set amidst the hills of Kakamigahara on the edge of a small artificial lake, the funeral hall Meiso no Mori (Forest of meditation) is cloaked in an undulating roof of white concrete that gives the building the appearance of suspended motion—a cloud afloat or a bird in flight. The fluid canopy is a reinforced-concrete shell that extends over more than 21,500 square feet (2,000 square meters). At a dozen points, the surface puckers and stretches to the ground to form columns that are continuous with the roof and act as structure as well as rainwater conduits. Designed to replace an older crematorium, the enclosure is set back from the roofline and includes a mix of ceremonial and back-of-house spaces

organized between the columns in top-lit rooms framed in travertine. To accommodate the operational requirements of the crematorium, Meiso no Mori buries the massive machinery of the furnace into the bulk of the hill at the southwest of the site, opening the interiors to funerary rituals and serving as a meditation on form. In this way, the soft curves of the roof become a nuanced ceiling with varied heights that meet the range of funerary functions and respond to practical needs with a bold spatial and structural experiment.—PS



Previous spread: View across the reinforced concrete roof  
 Clockwise from top: North facade from the pond. Waiting-room interior facing the pond. View from the cemetery



From top: Structural-displacement diagram of the roof. North elevation. North-south section. Ground-floor plan with entrance hall (1), valedictory room (2), ceremonial hall (3), crematorium (4), lobby (5), and waiting room (6)

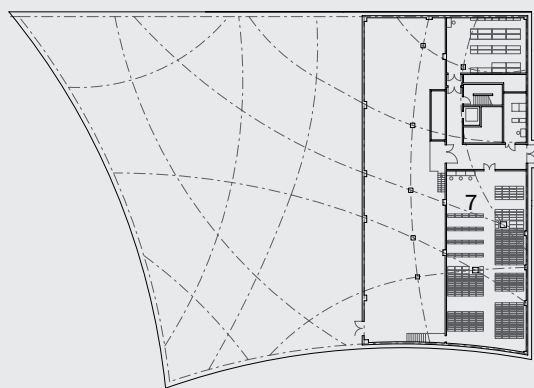
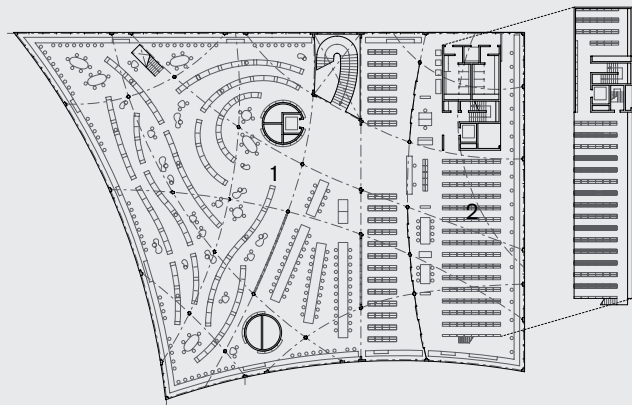
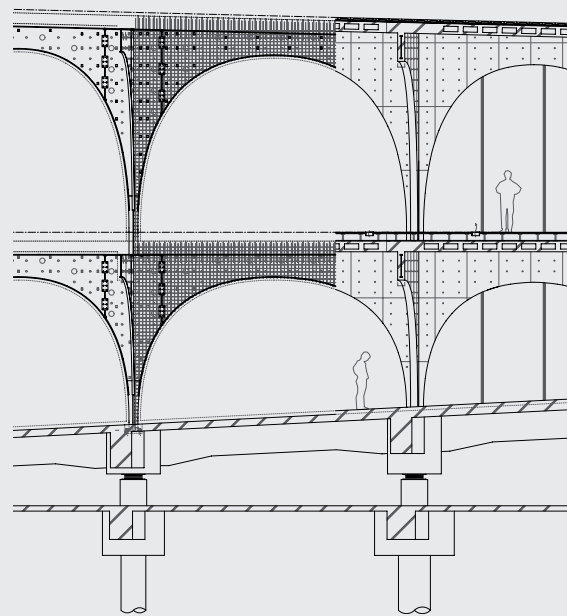
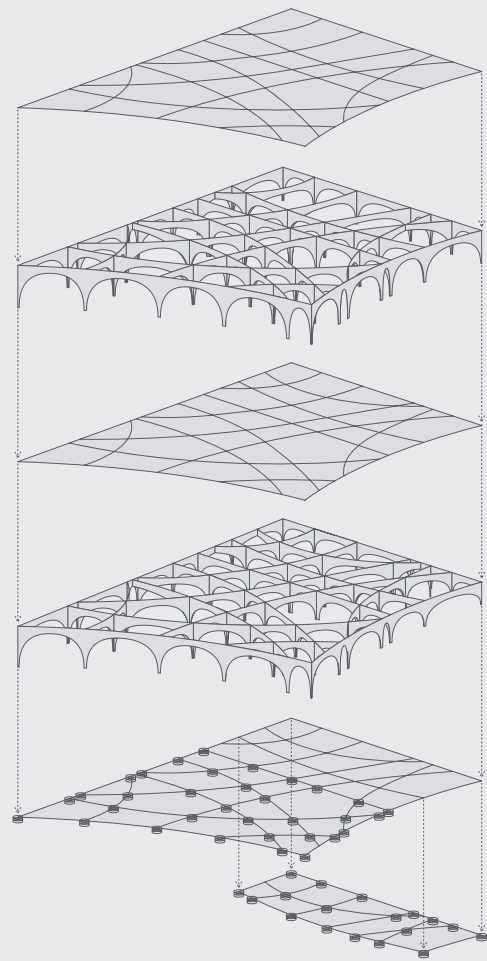


Tama Art University Library is located on the university's graduate campus in Hachioji, a southeastern suburb of Tokyo. The upper floor hosts reading stacks and study spaces, while the ground level, which is pitched three degrees to the site's slope, holds offices and communal spaces, including a café, gallery, and multimedia center. Illuminated by night, the library reveals a vaulted interior of tapered columns and exposed concrete that retains the feeling of a subterranean grotto. The sculpted interior, developed in an initial scheme that placed the library belowground, contrasts with a streamlined glass exterior that shears the vaults, revealing their angularity and emphasizing their semicircular sections at the building's

acute corners. Referencing classical arched structures, the columns are unusually attenuated and linear, with cruciform profiles that are generated by the intersection of two planes and minimized by a core of reinforcing steel. The spans of the arches vary, with the largest fifty-three feet (sixteen meters). They are regulated by a structural grid of curved lines that creates sinuous colonnades organically extending across the interior. Weaving through the arches, book stacks follow their own curved logic, creating labyrinthine reading spaces that are experienced entropically.—PS



Previous spread: Corner of the east facade  
Clockwise from top: Second-floor open stacks and reading area. North facade with main entrance. Staircase leading to the second floor



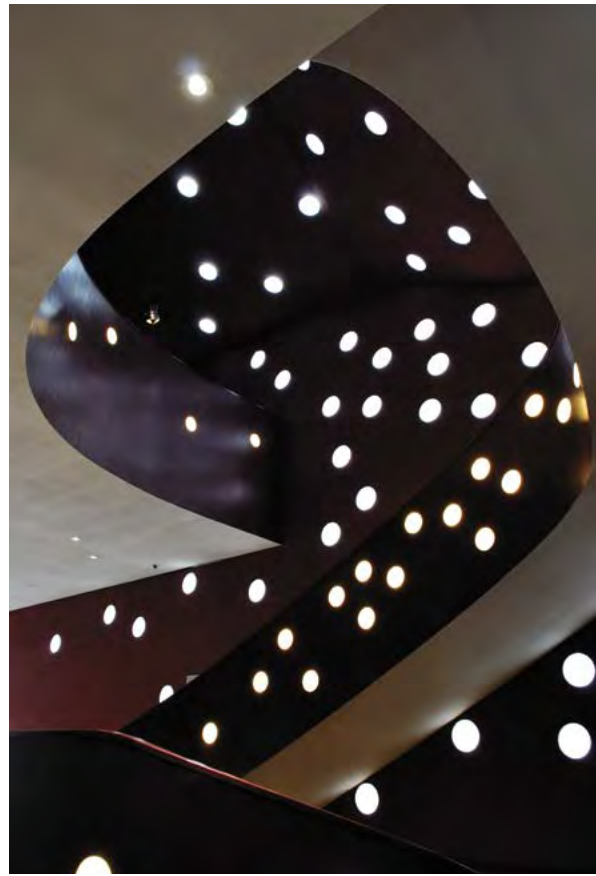
Clockwise from top left: Diagram of arched structural system of steel and concrete. Plans of the second, ground, and basement floors with open-stack reading room (1), closed stacks (2), multimedia center (3), offices (4), arcade gallery (5), café (6), and compact and valuable stacks (7). Section detailing stages of arch construction



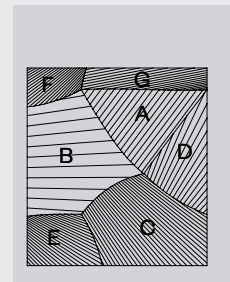
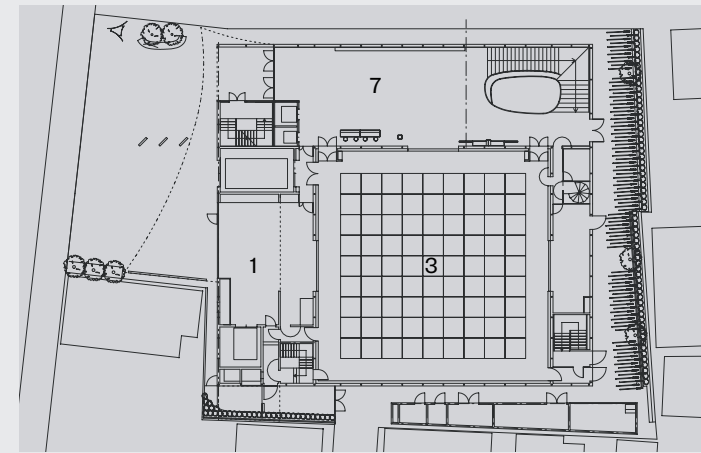
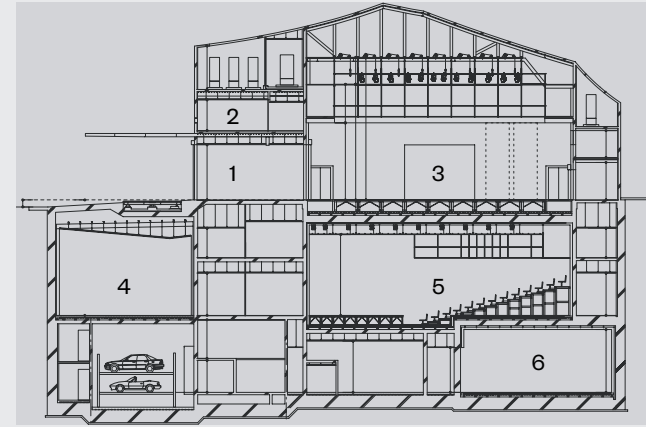
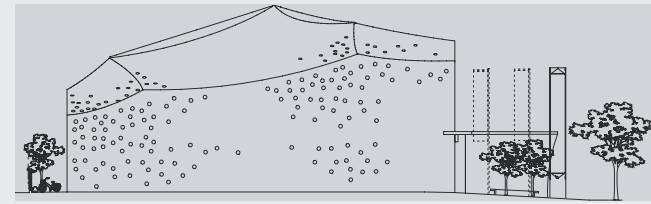


Nestled in a compact residential neighborhood across from one of Tokyo's elevated rail lines in the western part of the city, ZA-KOENJI is a six-story, mixed-use theater. The main theater and café are located aboveground, while the bulk of the building is recessed below, including a second theater, a hall for the choreographed dance festival Awa Odori, and rehearsal, film, and music-editing rooms. The theaters are vertically stacked to accommodate the small site; to maintain acoustic conditions, Ito devised a structural system that individually insulates each floor. The building's roof was fabricated with thin, black steel plates that define peaked and scalloped surfaces. Its expressionistic forms were generated by carving

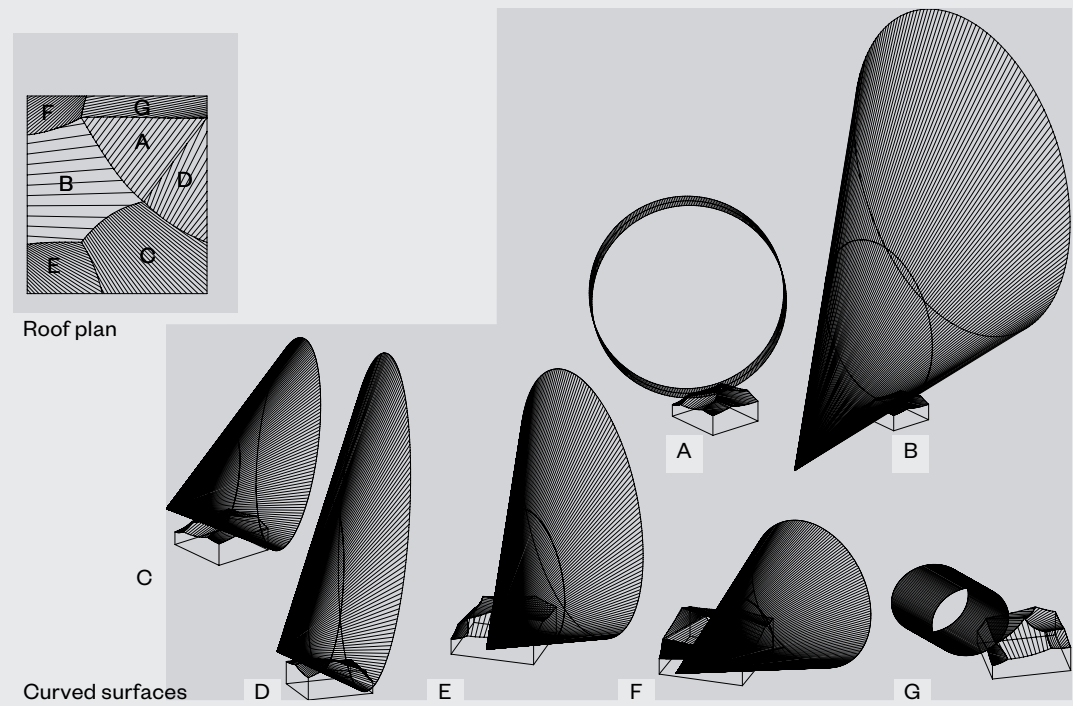
platonic solids—cones and cylinders—from a cube, creating a geometrically complex shape that could be unrolled into planar surfaces for construction. These forms give the theater a bold, asymmetrical profile that inserts an animated presence among the flat and ninety-degree planes of the surrounding buildings. Inside this unusual volume, circular light wells, made out of frosted glass inset in the steel, create an atmospheric constellation of indirect light within the deep red interiors.—PS



Previous spread: View from the northwest toward elevated railway  
 Clockwise from top left: Staircase. Ground-floor entrance foyer. Aerial view of the west facade

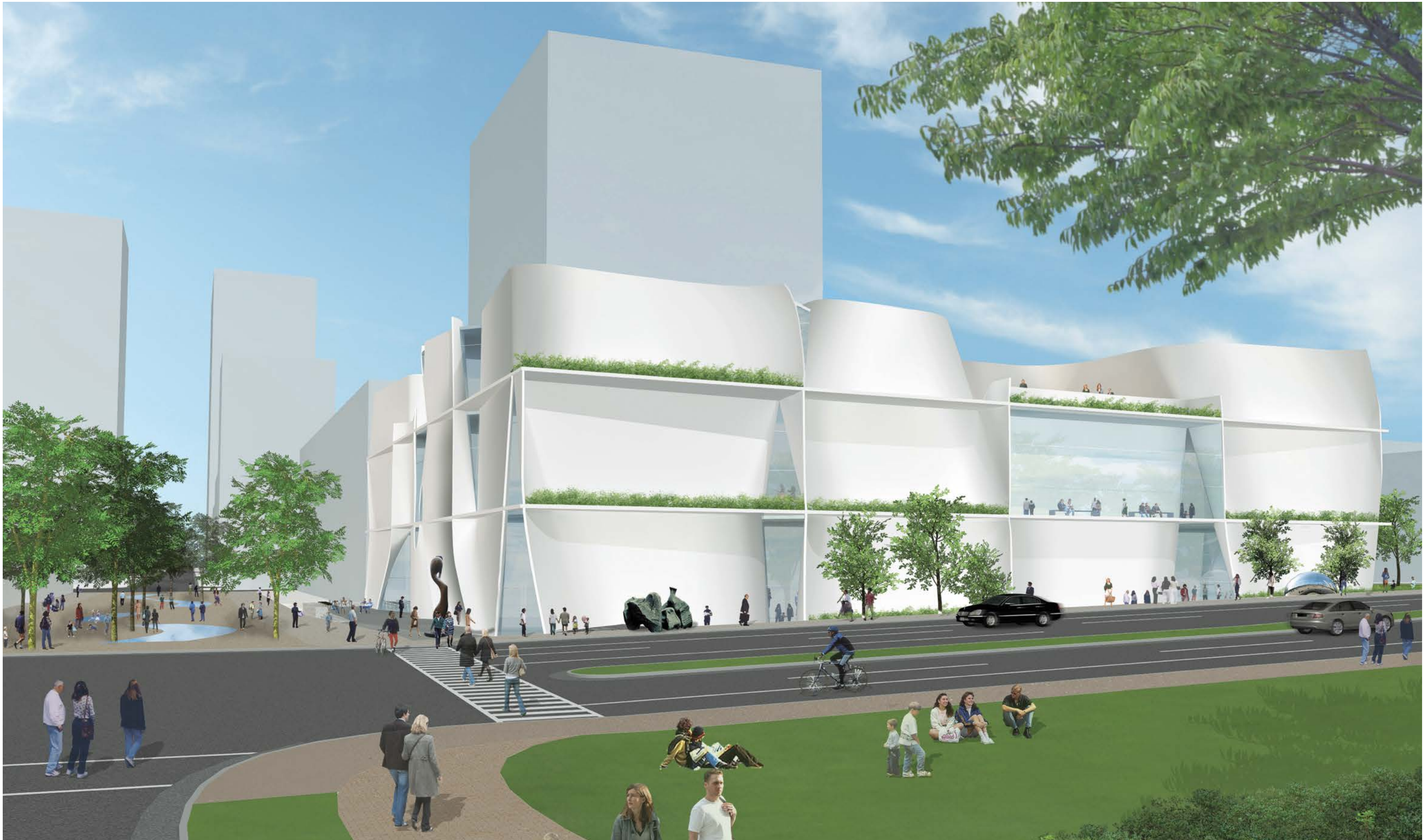


Roof plan



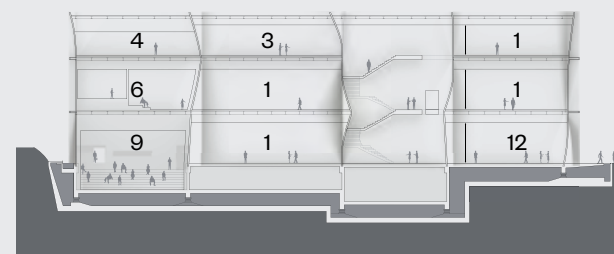
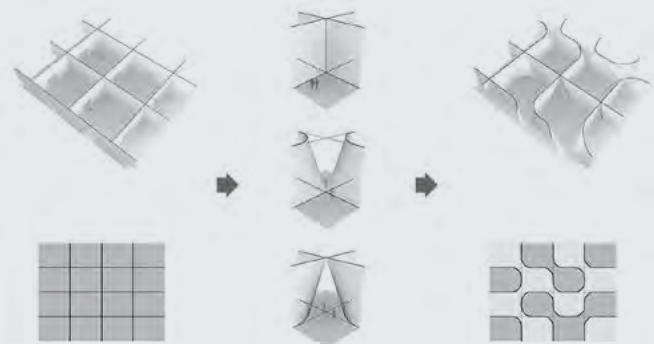
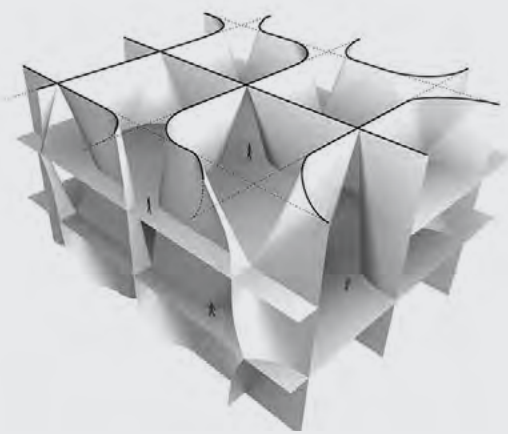
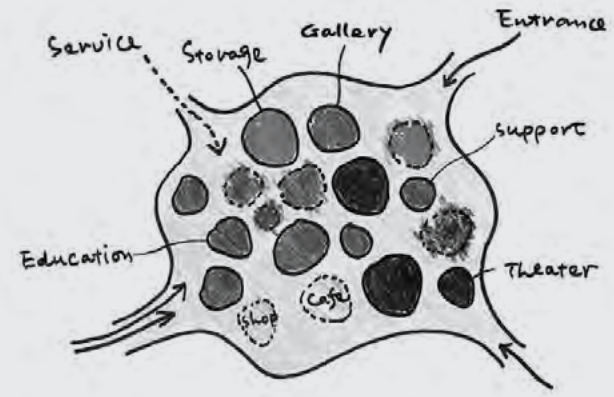
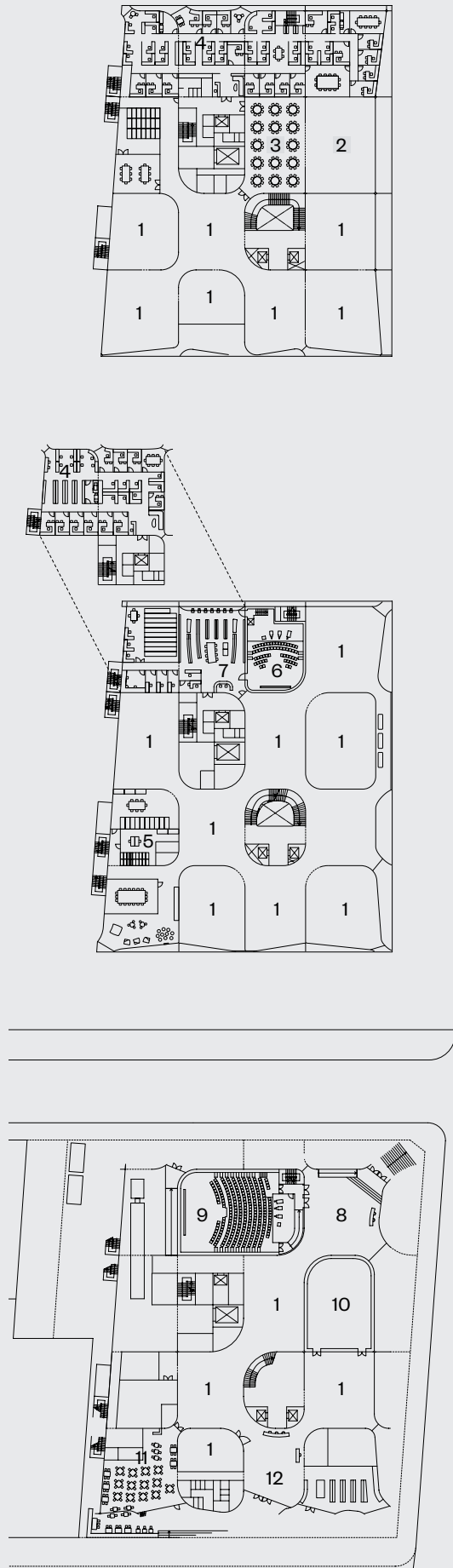
Curved surfaces

Clockwise from top left: Section with loading bay (1), administration (2), ZA-KOENJI One (3), Awa Odori Hall (4), ZA-KOENJI Two (5), and rehearsal room (6). West elevation. Study for the curved surface geometry of the roof. Ground-floor plan with foyer (7)

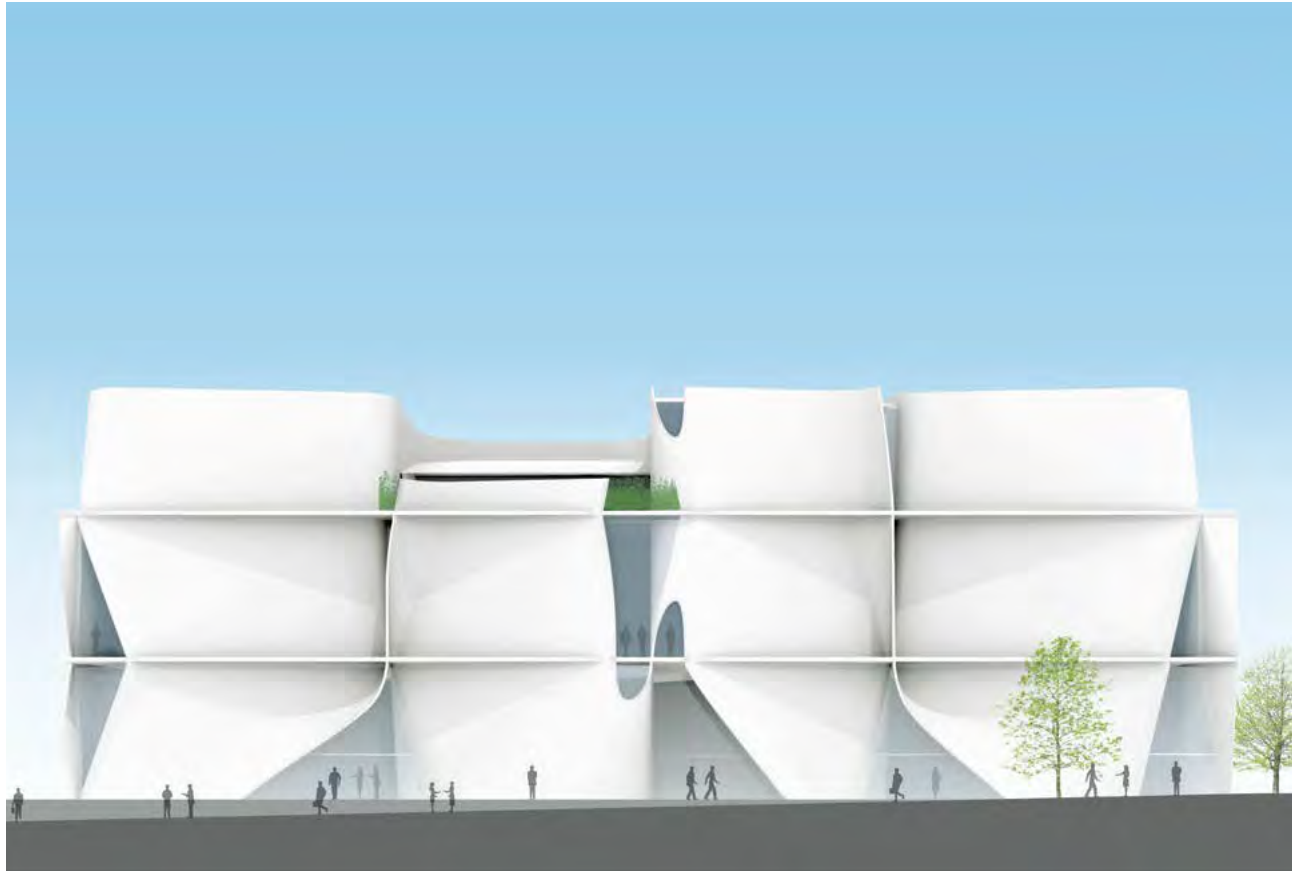


In this unrealized proposal to replace an existing brutalist building by Mario Ciampi, a grid of contoured white forms sheathed in glass combines an art museum and a film archive. Located on the southeastern edge of the University of California, Berkeley, campus, where the university meets the city, the proposed three-story structure holds exhibition spaces and research facilities accessible to students, faculty, and the public. The upper two floors house galleries, while the lower floor holds a theater, black box, and restaurant. The design was generated through a series of transformations to an orthogonal grid. Each ninety-degree corner is gently warped to become a radiused curve. Where the wall meets the floor

or two walls intersect, a softened threshold is introduced by folding the plane seamlessly into the adjoining space. The sculptural walls offer a blended sequence of rooms, with the removal of the edge creating a psychological and visual experience of continuity, even as the plan retains traces of the grid's ordered quadrants. Encasing a thin layer of concrete between two steel plates creates the tautly curved surfaces. With its design period coinciding with the 2008 financial collapse, the project was never realized due to budget reasons.—PS



Clockwise from top right: Plans of the third, second, and ground floors with gallery (1), terrace (2), event space (3), offices (4), study center (5), screening room (6), art and film library (7), theater lobby (8), theater (9), black box (10), restaurant (11), and main entrance (12). West-east section. Distortion of the orthogonal grid to create curved walls and continuous spaces. Diagram of curved gallery walls. Conceptual sketch of interconnected functions



Previous spread: Perspective of the southeast corner looking toward the city  
From top: South elevation. Perspective of the south facade from Center Street

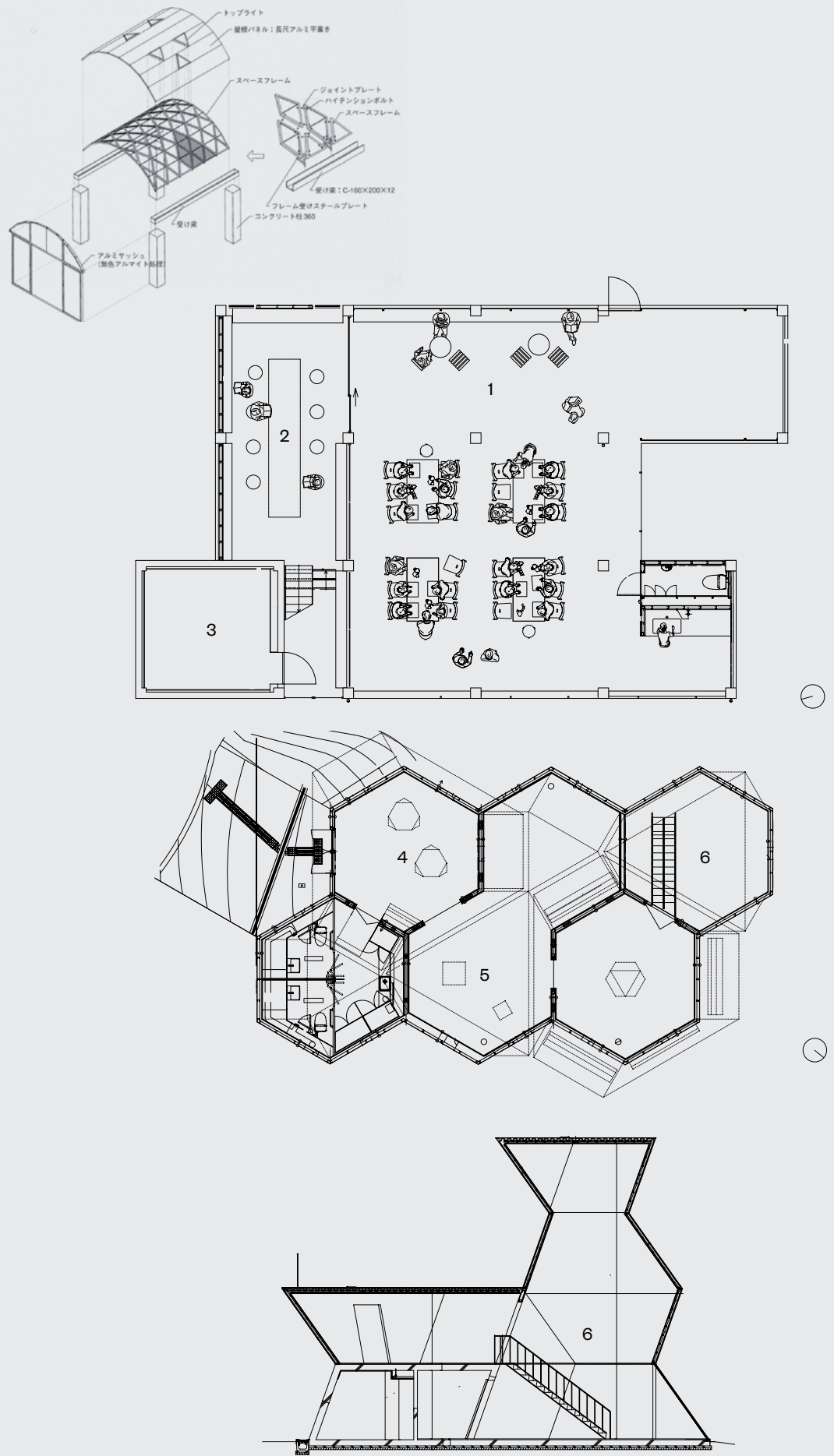


Located on a hillside of Omishima, a small island on the Seto Inland Sea, Toyo Ito Museum of Architecture, Imabari, is composed of Steel Hut, an exhibition space for Ito's work, and Silver Hut, an educational workshop and research center. The two buildings are in close proximity, linked by landscaping and a winding path. Steel Hut is a series of polyhedral modules, each with ten-foot (three-meter) sides that link together to create exhibition galleries. Fabricated out of steel painted black, the geometric forms stand apart from the landscape and give the building the appearance of an oversized molecular structure—an effect experienced on the interior as well, where gallery walls angle according to the number of sides.

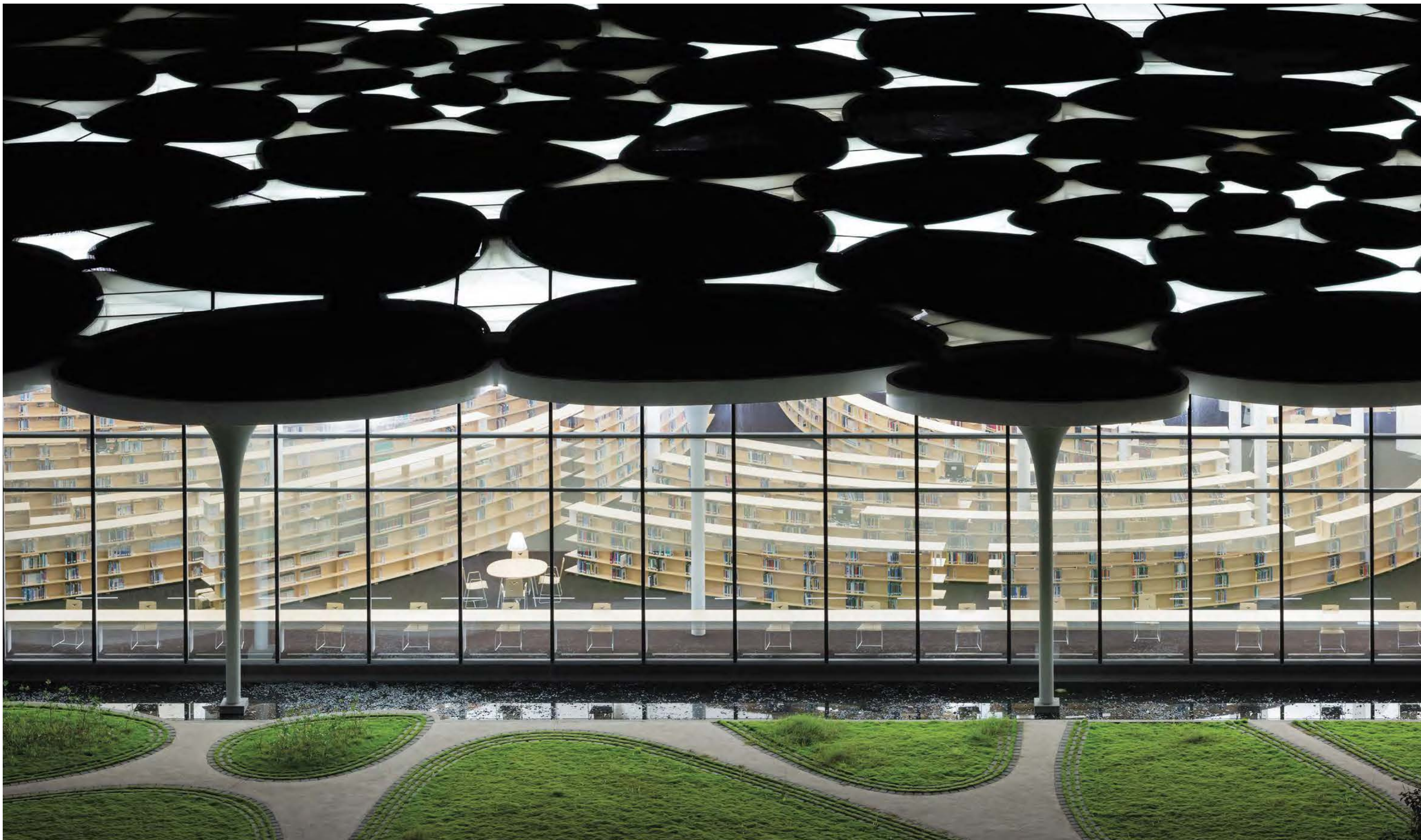
Three stacked modules form a Brancusi-like tower for hosting lectures and roundtables. Nearby, Silver Hut reconstructs, virtually unaltered, Ito's pavilion-like Tokyo home design from 1984. Seven vaulted roofs made out of lightweight steel span concrete posts set at approximately 12-foot (3.6-meter) distances. Vaults extended over two bays create larger courtyard spaces. The use of translucent materials references traditional Japanese domestic architecture while reprising Ito's early experiments with lightweight, provisional designs that privileged spare, prefabricated elements over form.—PS



Previous spread: Steel Hut looking west toward Seto Inland Sea  
 Clockwise from top: Silver Hut looking west. Aerial view of the site. Interior of a workshop in Silver Hut

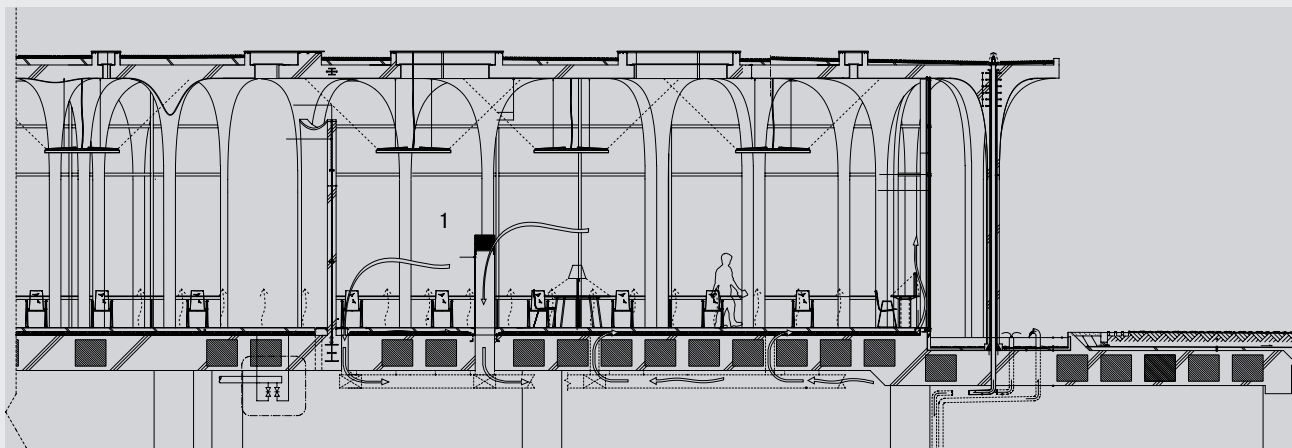
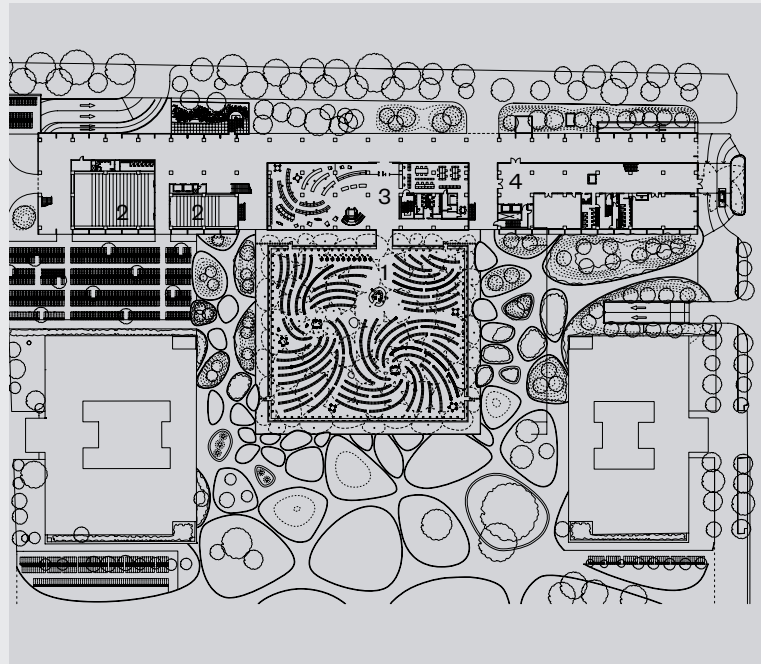
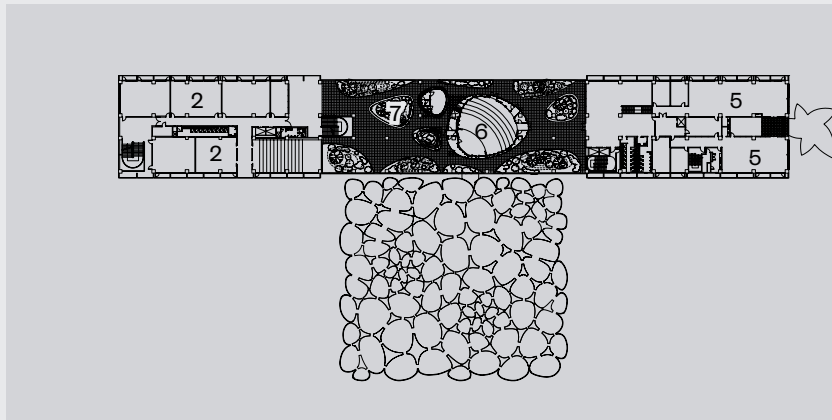
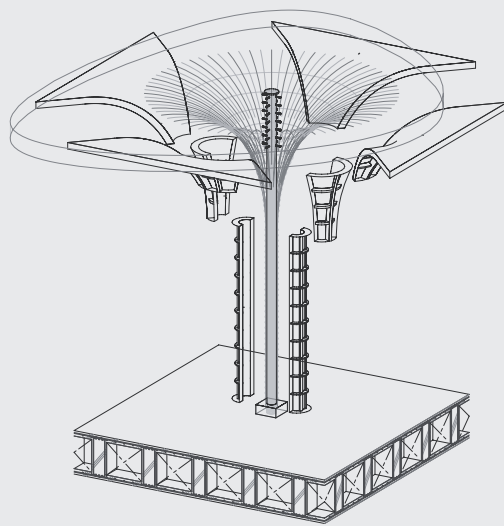
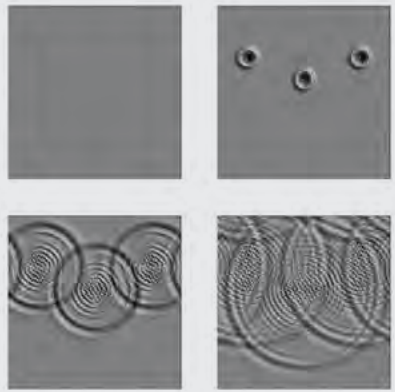


Clockwise from top: Diagram of Silver Hut components. Silver Hut plan with outdoor workshop (1), archive (2), and storage (3). Steel Hut ground-floor plan with entrance hall (4), gallery (5), and salon (6). Steel Hut section



Located toward the northern part of the National Taiwan University campus, the College of Social Sciences is comprised of two buildings: a single-story library and, rising above, an elongated eight-story block holding classrooms, conference rooms, and research laboratories. The beaux-arts style campus, established by the Japanese colonial government in the 1920s as Taihoku Imperial University, is dominated by a central axis along which the main university buildings are symmetrically organized. The college follows this general alignment while subtly introducing geometry inspired by patterns found in nature. The facade of the taller teaching wing is a regular concrete frame that extends beyond the line of the glass to become shade

balconies and eaves; interspersed within this grid, two- and three-story voids introduce gardens, light, and air across the building. The library's open-stack reading area is composed around a grove-like cluster of columns. The locations and orientations of the columns were determined algorithmically; each slender, tubular support unfurls at the top into an irregular ellipse. Gathered together, these differently sized capitals leave gaps and crevices between, illuminating the library from above by dappled natural light. The reading room's geometry carries through both to the roof, where the elliptical planes hold an artificial lawn, and the surrounding plaza, where the forms are transformed into ovoid greens among winding walkways.—PS



Clockwise from top right: Radial pattern of a water droplet. Diagram of the fiber-reinforced plastic framework used to construct the reading-room columns. Section detail of the ground-floor reading room. Plans of the ground and third floors with open-shelf reading room (1), classroom (2), library entrance (3), exhibition space (4), offices (5), conference hall (6), and garden (7)



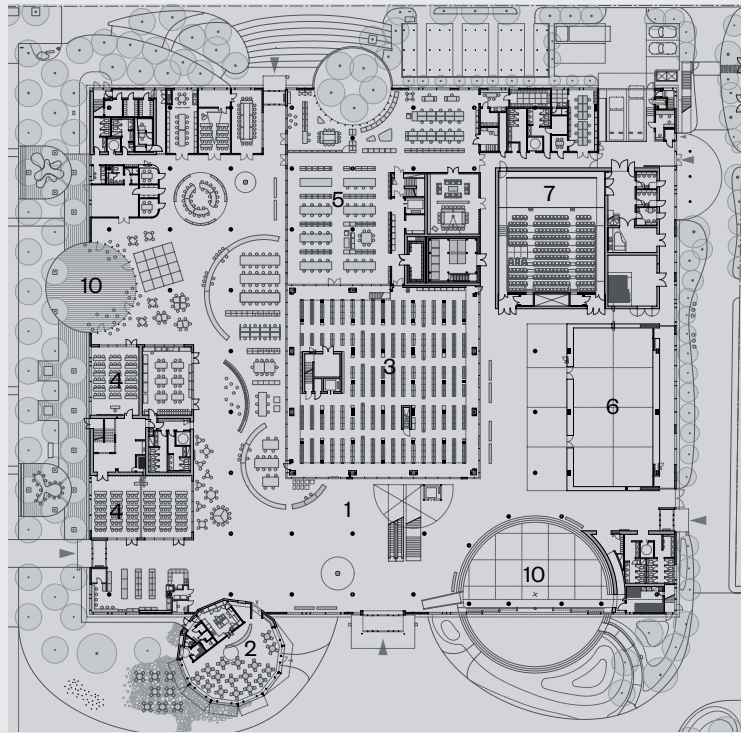
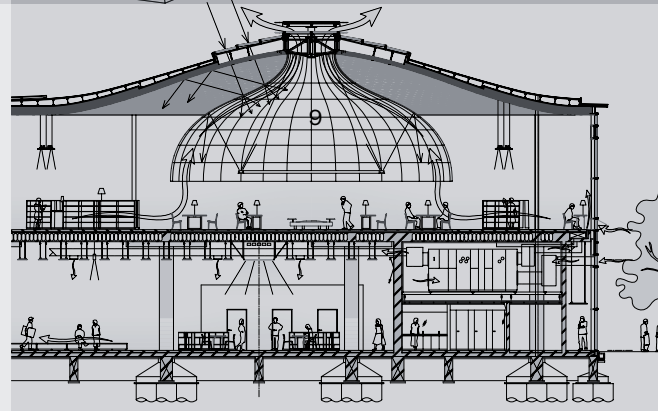
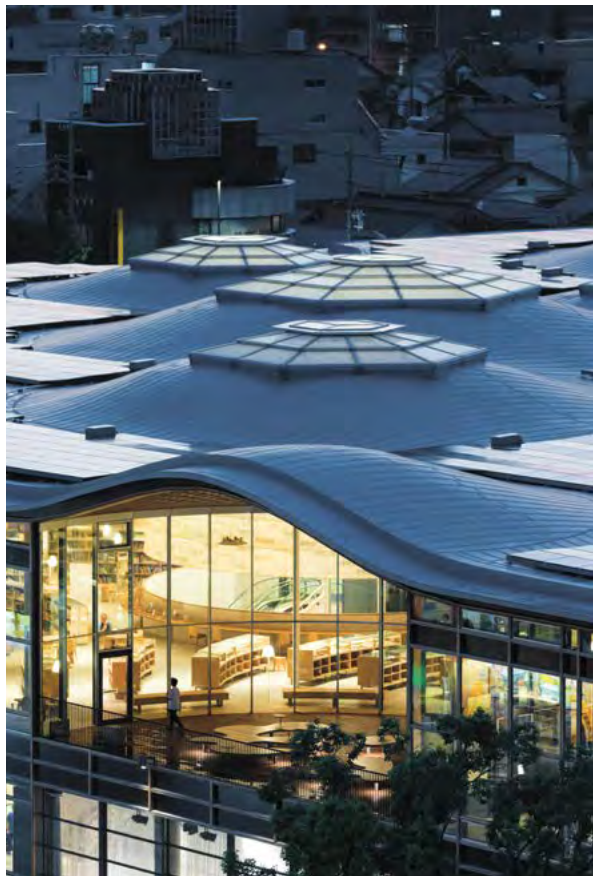
Previous spread: Library reading room at night  
Clockwise from top: Open stacks in the reading room. View of the library with the classroom and research block behind.  
Reading room





Minna no Mori Gifu Media Cosmos, a two-story library, multimedia, and community center located in downtown Gifu, began with the idea of enclosing many homes under one roof. This idea is most explicitly explored in the second-floor reading room, with a series of suspended “globes”—as Ito calls them—creating intimate reading cupolas within the larger space of the library. Fabricated out of sheer polyester fabric stretched over rings, each globe shelters a space for a specific reading audience and is bounded by radially arranged book stacks. These individualized spaces for reading, play, and study are brought together beneath a majestic, gently rolling roof of laminated Japanese cypress. A diagonal grid of thin

strips interlaced twenty-one-layers deep provides sufficient rigidity without additional structural steel. The fragrant cypress adds a less tangible, atmospheric dimension to the space, while the latticework allows in natural light. At the ground level, a series of volumes clad in different materials—a community theater, a gallery, an information center, and closed book stacks—give the impression of a loose composition of individual buildings along a public street. The project represents a shift in Ito’s practice toward more ecologically sustainable, community-oriented design, which has had particular resonance following the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake.—PS



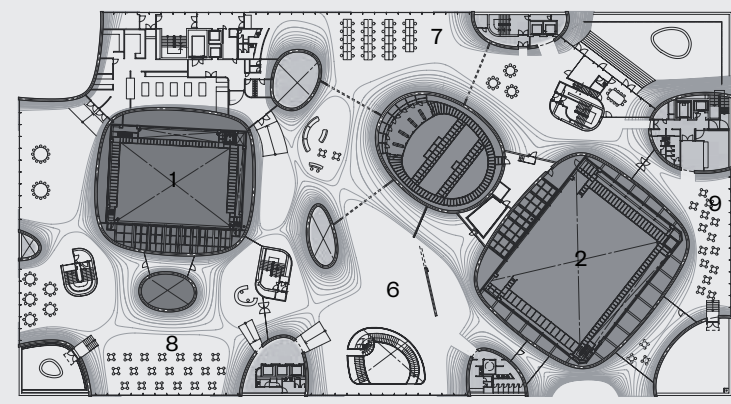
Clockwise from top right: Initial sketch of the circulation of air and light through reading "globes," 2010. Ground-floor plan with entrance hall (1), restaurant (2), book stacks (3), lecture hall (4), offices (5), community gallery (6), and theater (7). Section detail at a reading "globe." Second-floor plan with open stacks (8), reading "globes" (9), and terrace (10)

Previous spread: Browsing "globe"  
Clockwise from top: Second-floor reading room. Kinkazan terrace. Aerial view at night

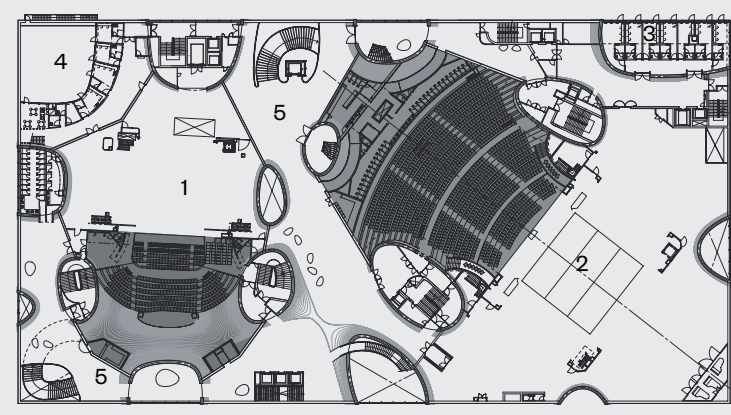


National Taichung Theater, located in a redevelopment zone near the center of the Taiwanese city, holds three opera theaters—the Grand Theater boasts seating for up to two thousand people—along with retail shops and restaurants that open onto a landscaped plaza at the lower floors. The building's porous structure, described as a sound cave, is the result of a fluid topological grid in which three-dimensional curved shapes soften and distort the divisions between horizontal and vertical planes. Individually bent vertical truss walls form the catenary curves of the halls, skinned in metal mesh and given supple surface through sprayed and poured concrete. The concave spaces bear horizontal floors to accommodate

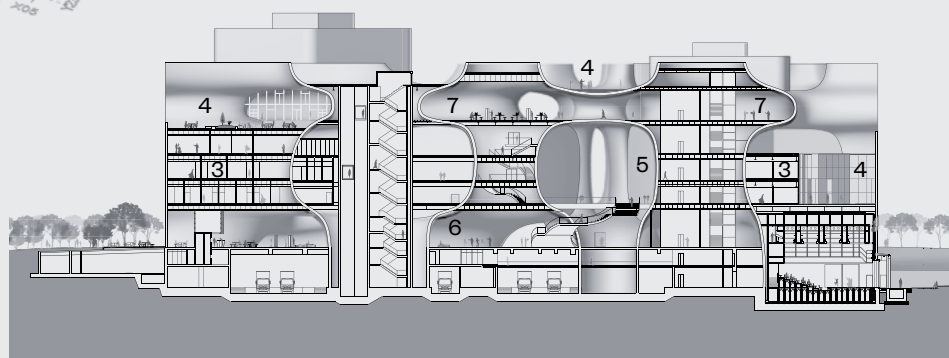
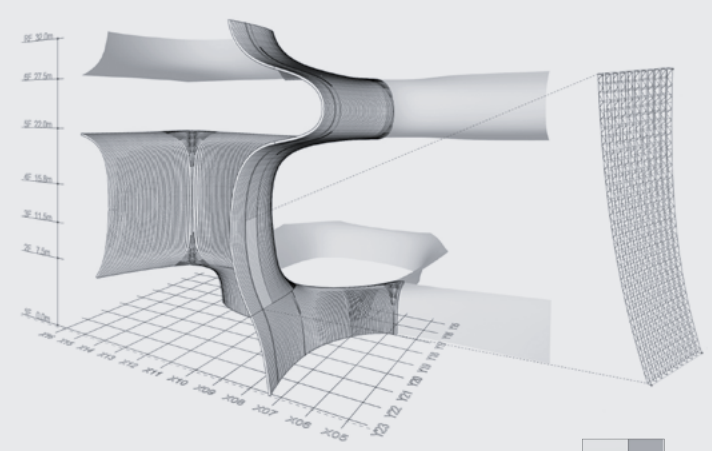
seating and theater stages. National Taichung Theater realizes a longstanding theme in Ito's work, in which the grid is modified and transformed to produce sensory-rich spaces that are as variable as those of the natural world. At the opera house, this connection to the environment is realized by merging interior and exterior in cambered forms that resemble the digestive organs that in Ito's words "are in some ways inside and in some ways outside the body."<sup>1</sup>—PS



Floor 5



Floor 2



From top: Plans of the fifth and second floors with playhouse (1), grand theater (2), dressing room (3), terrace (4), foyer (5), event space (6), offices (7), restaurant (8), and green room (9). Catenoid construction unit made up of truss walls. North-south section



Previous spread: View toward the city  
From top: Southeast facade from the plaza. Main entrance at the southeast facade

1. Toyo Ito, interview by Terunobu Fujimori, "In Pursuit of Truth under Changing Circumstances," in Toyo Ito, *Toyo Ito 1971-2001*, trans. Hiroshi Watanabe (Tokyo: Toto, 2014), 29.

Toyo Ito (born Keijo, 1941)  
Toyo Ito & Associates, Architects  
(established Tokyo, 1971)

Toyo Ito studied architecture at University of Tokyo before working at the offices of Kiyonori Kikutake from 1965 to 1969. He opened his own studio in Tokyo, known initially as Urban Robot (Urbot), in 1971, before establishing Toyo Ito & Associates, Architects, in 1979. His earliest projects were individual residences, including Aluminum House (1971), in Kanagawa, and White U (1976), in Tokyo. His practice gained international prominence following his critically acclaimed, technically innovative Sendai Mediatheque (1995–2001). Recent projects by Toyo Ito & Associates, Architects, include Minna no Mori Media Cosmos (2011–15), in Gifu, Japan, and National Taichung Theater, currently under construction. Following the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011, Ito started Home-for-All, a reconstruction initiative to provide buildings for impacted communities. Ito has been a visiting professor at Harvard Graduate School of Design, University of Tokyo, Columbia University, University of California, Los Angeles, Kyoto University, and Tama Art University. His writings have been widely published and his work broadly exhibited, including in *Toyo Ito: Generative Order* (2008) at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum. Ito has received numerous international awards including the 2013 Pritzker Architecture Prize, the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement at the eighth International Architecture Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia, the 2010 Praemium Imperiale, and the Royal Gold Medal from the Royal Institute of British Architects in 2006.

Kazuyo Sejima (born Ibaraki, 1956)  
Kazuyo Sejima & Associates  
(established Tokyo, 1987)  
SANAA (established Tokyo, 1995)

Kazuyo Sejima studied architecture at Japan Women's University before working in the offices of Toyo Ito. Sejima established her own studio, Kazuyo Sejima & Associates, in Tokyo in 1987. Her significant early projects include Saishunkan Seiyaku Women's Dormitory (1990–91), in Kumamoto, Villa in the Forest (1992–94), in Chino, and Police Box (1994), in Tokyo. With Ryue Nishizawa, Sejima founded SANAA (Sejima and Nishizawa and Associates) in 1995. SANAA's recent projects include Grace Farms, in New Canaan, Connecticut, and Okayama University Café, in Japan, both completed in 2015. Both Sejima and Nishi-

zawa maintain individual practices parallel to SANAA, which have achieved international recognition and are often sites of intensely experimental work. Sejima's recent work includes Inujima Art House Project (2008–10) and Nakamachi Terrace Community Center and Library (2010–14). She has taught at Princeton University and École polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne, and is currently a visiting professor at Tama Art University, Japan Women's University, Kanazawa College of Art, Okayama University, Keio University, and University of Applied Arts Vienna, Austria. In 2010, Sejima and Nishizawa were corecipients of the Pritzker Architecture Prize. They have also been awarded the Golden Lion award at the ninth International Architecture Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia, in 2004, the Kunstpreis Berlin from the Berlin Academy of Arts, in 2007, and the Rolf Schock Visual Arts Prize, in 2008.

Ryue Nishizawa (born Kanagawa, 1966)  
Office of Ryue Nishizawa  
(established Tokyo, 1997)  
SANAA (established Tokyo, 1995)

Ryue Nishizawa studied architecture at Yokohama National University while working in the offices of Toyo Ito & Associates, Architects. After graduation, he worked with Kazuyo Sejima at Kazuyo Sejima & Associates in Tokyo. With Sejima, Nishizawa founded SANAA (Sejima and Nishizawa and Associates) in 1995. In 1997, he founded Office of Ryue Nishizawa, maintaining this practice in parallel with SANAA. SANAA's proposal for Taichung City Cultural Center in Taiwan is currently in design and the firm has recently been selected to extend both the Art Gallery of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia, and the Shiga Museum of Art near Kyoto. Nishizawa's recent work includes Roof and Mushroom Pavilion, in Kyoto, completed in 2013, and Ikuta Church, in Kanagawa, completed in 2014. Nishizawa has taught at Princeton University, Harvard Graduate School of Design, and École polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne. He is currently a professor at Yokohama Graduate School of Architecture and a visiting professor at Kanazawa College of Art and Okayama University. In 2010, Nishizawa and Sejima were corecipients of the Pritzker Architecture Prize. They have also been awarded the Golden Lion award at the ninth International Architecture Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia, in 2004, the Kunstpreis Berlin from the Berlin Academy of Arts, in 2007, and the Rolf Schock Visual Arts Prize, in 2008.

Sou Fujimoto (born Hokkaido, 1971)  
Sou Fujimoto Architects  
(established Tokyo, 2000)

Sou Fujimoto studied architecture at University of Tokyo before establishing his own studio, Sou Fujimoto Architects, in 2000. His projects include Children's Centre for Psychiatric Rehabilitation (2003), in Hokkaido, Final Wooden House (2006–08), in Kuma-gun, Musashino Art University Museum and Library (2007–10), and the 2013 Serpentine Gallery Pavilion, in London. Fujimoto's recent work includes winning competition designs for École Polytechnique at Université Paris-Saclay and House of Hungarian Music in Budapest. Fujimoto has taught at Tokyo University of Science, University of Tokyo, Kyoto University, Keio University, and University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and was a judge at the World Architecture Festival in 2015. His writings have been published widely and his work exhibited internationally, most recently in *Sou Fujimoto: Futures of the Future* (2015), held at Toto Gallery and Shanghai Museum of Contemporary Art. He was awarded a Royal Institute of British Architects International Fellowship in 2012, and received the 2014 WSJ Magazine Architecture Innovator Award, 2013 Marcus Prize, and 2008 Private House award from the World Architecture Festival for Final Wooden House. He was corecipient of the Golden Lion at the thirteenth International Architecture Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia, in 2012. In 2008, Fujimoto published *Primitive Future* (INAX, Tokyo), which became the year's bestselling architecture book.

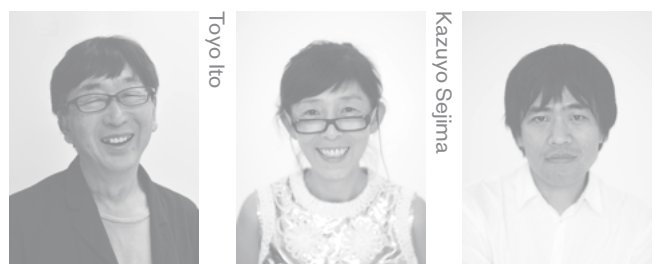
Akihisa Hirata (born Osaka, 1971)  
Akihisa Hirata Architecture Office  
(established Tokyo, 2005)

Akihisa Hirata studied architecture at University of Tokyo and completed postgraduate studies at Kyoto University Graduate School of Engineering. He worked for Toyo Ito & Associates, Architects, from 1997 until 2005, when he founded Akihisa Hirata Architecture Office in Tokyo. Hirata's recent work includes the Higashi Totsuka Church (2015), in Yokohama, and Kotoriku Meguroku Collective Housing (2012–14), in Tokyo. He has lectured at Harvard Graduate School of Design, Bauhaus Dessau, and the Bartlett School of Architecture at University College, London. He is currently a part-time lecturer at Tohoku University, Kyoto University, University of Tokyo, and Tama Art University. In 2015, his work was shown

at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Krakow and at the Triennale di Milano. An exhibition of his work, *Akihisa Hirata: Tangling*, was held at London's Architecture Foundation Project Space, in 2012, and at Grand Hornu Images, in Hornu, Belgium, in 2013. Hirata was a corecipient of the Golden Lion at the thirteenth International Architecture Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia, in 2012, and has also been awarded the 2015 Colored Concrete Works Award, the 2012 Elita Design Award, ELLE DECO's Young Japanese Design Talent Award, in 2009, and the Japan Institute of Architects' 2008 New Face Award.

Junya Ishigami (born Kanagawa, 1974)  
Junya.Ishigami + Associates  
(established Tokyo, 2004)

Junya Ishigami studied architecture at Tokyo University of the Arts, receiving an MFA in 2000, before working at Kazuyo Sejima & Associates from 2000 to 2004. In 2004, he established Junya.Ishigami + Associates. Ishigami's acclaimed first building, Kanagawa Institute of Technology Workshop, received the 2009 Architectural Institute of Japan Prize. Recent work includes a commission for a public sculpture in Sydney, Cloud Arch, and a winning competition proposal for House of Peace (2014), a structure for Copenhagen's Nordhavn harbor. His work has been the subject of multiple publications and exhibitions including, most recently, the monograph *Junya Ishigami: How Small? How Vast? How Architecture Grows* (Hatje Cantz, 2014). Ishigami is currently an associate professor at Tohoku University in Sendai. In 2015, he taught at Princeton University School of Architecture, and in 2014, at Harvard Graduate School of Design. Ishigami's installation work includes Balloon (2007) at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Tokyo, and Architecture as Air: Study for Châteaueau la Coste (2010) at the twelfth International Architecture Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia, which was awarded the Golden Lion and the Global Award for Sustainable Architecture and was exhibited in 2011 at the Barbican's Curve, a gallery space in London.



Toyo Ito

Kazuyo Sejima

Ryue Nishizawa



Sou Fujimoto

Akihisa Hirata

Junya Ishigami

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# Colophon

# 254

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