

**SUBLIME**  
NEW DESIGN  
AND  
ARCHITECTURE  
FROM JAPAN



gestalten

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藏书章

# SUBLIME

## NEW DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE FROM JAPAN

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PREFACE by Andrej Kupetz

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# //VOYAGE SUBLIME



There is no way around it. Anyone who wants to get to the bottom of the enduring fascination that Japan's architecture and design have had on the West since the opening of the country 150 years ago, has to see the Land of the Rising Sun with his or her own eyes. For even if the influence of Japanese designers on Western product design is greater than ever before, and the avant-garde of Japanese architecture has produced examples—indeed, milestones—of its wonderful art in New York, Essen, Basel, and Metz, the essence of Japanese design is so very closely associated with everyday life in this island empire, with a culture in which function and ritual fuse in such a way that they form their own self-contained cosmos. Nothing is created in this culture without a reason. Everything has meaning in its appearance. Deeper and more valuable meaning than could be transformed into the living environment of the West. The West receives only the form. It does not get the circumstances, much less the encodings needed to interpret them. For the West, Japanese form remains primarily exotic. But in a way other than that term would suggest. The exoticism of Japanese design is the complexity of simplicity. It adds value, in a way uniquely its own, to the Western concept of efficient industrial form—by means of a multifaceted process of leaving out. In Japan, this process has cultural, even religious, motivations. An object becomes larger and more complex the more effort and time we invest in reducing it. In the process we approach the core of its essence. In European philosophy, we describe the aesthetic phenomenon of the large and unattainable as sublime. Something is sublime if it reaches far beyond the category of the beautiful and reveals itself to the viewer only through his or her particular capability for empathy. The sublime is something we often encounter in Japan.

Japan, Tokyo, autumn, time for Designers Week: having landed at Narita Airport, anyone who wants to get to Tokyo the fastest way possible will take the Narita Express. An express train that stops at every station precisely at the location marked for it on the track. Even for travelers who do not speak the local language but are in full possession of its visual powers, it is almost impossible to miss their railway car and reserved seat. The impossible, even inconceivable, notion of getting on the Narita Express without a ticket and a seat reserva-

tion is almost precluded by the logistical perfection between the immigration counter, the baggage claim, the ticket office, and entering the train.

These first impressions of the Land of the Rising Sun do not yet have much to do with design, but all the more so with the Japanese way of life, an idea of social consensus that holds the country together inside, between its traditions and the reality of Asia's leading export economy. Even if the content of all the rites, ceremonies, and rules may be lost—which, by the way, is nothing more than a theory—this cohesion is possible, because ultimately the form has become content *per se*. The more the appearance is perfected, the stronger the content. And that in turn is the essential issue of Japanese design.

The first thing rolling past the windows of the Narita Express is a suburban landscape and then an urban tapestry that does not seem to want to stop. After about an hour, something like the idea of a center does appear. At Tokyu Station, the city's main train station, the train discharges its passengers and abandons them to the vortex of masses of people streaming in all directions. The imperial palace is within walking distance of the train station. Walking around it will take you five and a half kilometers. Nevertheless it remains invisible. If you go by foot, you will see nothing more than five and a half kilometers of wall—the wall of a city within the city; the outer skin of an otherwise impenetrable cosmos: for visitors and natives. Because at the time the emperor announced on radio the country's capitulation in the Second World War the Japanese considered him God who did not communicate with worldly people, the invisible imperial palace can be regarded as the origin of the culture of the Japanese sublime. During centuries of isolation, separated from everything profane, the divine found its form of expression. The sublime is from another world. It is approached, if at all, only through supernatural efforts.

Designers Week is held in late October and early November. The event has been taking place for several years now, and has become a fixed feature on the calendar of design weeks worldwide. It is well established—not least because of the internationally acknowledged competence of Japanese product design. This design event dispersed across several locations

and with a number of satellites through the city nevertheless offers a compact overview of the work of Japanese designers, especially young ones and primarily in the fields of interior design and consumer goods. But that is not all. Parallel events such as the 100% Design trade fair present the work of the Western avant-garde in Japan—with considerable success. The offerings at this trade fair of young college graduates from Europe, which are essentially prototypes and quirky in terms of craftsmanship, delight the Japanese public, which after 60 years of industrial history still harbor a special relationship to the handmade. The organizers of Tokyo Designers Week report more than 100,000 visitors—an impressive number by Western standards. It is a sign of Japanese interest in design, a special curiosity for the new that expects a mixture of culture and commerce that is very much its own. In Tokyo, culturally motivated design exhibitions are barely distinguishable from sales exhibitions. That is because everything has to be consumed in Japan if it is to produce a perceptible success.

Design Tide is one such exhibition. It is on view during Designers Week in Tokyo Midtown, a high-rise complex that has become the city's new design center since its opening in June 2007. The venerable JIDPO, Japan Industrial Design Promotion Organization, which is also located there, conferred the name Design Hub on the site, which seems justified by the presence of a series of anchor tenants such as the headquarters of the design department store chain Muji, stores of European designers and luxury brands, furniture dealers, hotels, and restaurants—typically Japanese as a perfect presentation of consumable culture. The exhibition presents a series of prototypes by young Japanese designers, prompting visitors to adopt new perspectives on form, space, and recycled materials. The works reflect another aspect of Japanese design: a playful approach to the world of everyday objects. One widespread example is the specifically Japanese design technique of placing a character—usually a good spirit—on designed objects, lending them characteristics that make them individual personalities.

Directly in front of the Midtown Tower, the fashion designer Issey Miyake and the architect Tadao Ando have turned their dream of a contemporary Japanese design museum into reality. Miyake and Ando have been the great,

internationally admired communicators of the Japanese philosophy of design ever since they conquered the West in the late 1970s. And even if they are at home in completely different *métiers*, both have taken as the starting point for their design the transformation of an industrial material into a valuable medium by reflecting on the craft traditions of their native land. In Ando's case, it is plain exposed concrete, but with such a fine grain that its surface recalls the depth of matte glass. But Ando goes even further. He calculates the individual form panels of his concrete façades according to the size of tatami mats; together with the holes for the tie wires—which are necessary to join the form panels—this results in an unmistakable surface grid. Ando quite deliberately and successfully uses craft processes to personalize industrial materials and thus infuse them with culture.

Miyake, by contrast, chose industrial polyester materials, folding them according to traditional, elaborate craft processes and then fixing their form with heat. The resulting refined pleats are the point of departure for a kind of fashion that drapes the body rather than clothing it in conventions. The 21\_21 Design Sight, which also opened in the summer of 2007, is a museum and research center for design designed by Tadao Ando. It is run by Issey Miyake, the graphic designer Taku Satoh, the design journalist Noriko Kawakami, and the product designer Naoto Fukasawa. The museum concentrates on current Japanese design in all branches, organizes events, and produces numerous publications to accompany design events in Japan. The name 21\_21 Design Sight alludes to 20/20 vision. The exhibition of the designer Tokujin Yoshioka, in which he explored “second nature,” has not been forgotten. Yoshioka understands that to mean the possibility for transferring natural—that is, organic—growth to artificial, industrial production types. In aquariums holding a cubic meter of water, crystalline structures formed into impressive furniture sculptures over time. These objects looked too beautiful to be true; Yoshioka presented them in a high-tech stalactite cave, hanging on polyester threads from the ceiling of the exhibition space.

Back in the Midtown Tower. In the Muji showroom there are strangely familiar things to admire. Suddenly there are classics from the history of European design: a bentwood chair and a tubular steel chair from Thonet, just a little different, reinterpreted slightly.

The solution: Muji commissioned Thonet in Frankenberg, in Hesse, Germany, to produce analogies—or, more accurately—reinterpretations of classics of industrial design. Japan's admiration for Bauhaus furniture is proverbial. Perhaps that is because the efficient form that Walter Gropius advocated has something deeply Japanese inherent in it—namely, that the product is to be regarded as a multilayered system. According to Bauhaus theory, every object possesses—in addition to its material level, which is assigned to practical use—a nonmaterial level that says something about the designer's attitude, and which, according to conventional design theory, can be divided into aesthetic and symbolic functions. Both levels are not only significant for the designer but also affect the behavior of the user, both as an individual and as part of society. This sense of an individual acting to contribute something to the community as a whole corresponds well with Japan's culture of consensus. So when Mumi reissues classics of European modernism, the point is to establish a relationship between Eastern and Western cultures of design.

Muji, which translates as “not a brand,” has been uniquely successful in recent years in popularizing its design philosophy of neutral and well-designed functional products at moderate prices, first in Japan, then in Europe, and now in the United States. The spiritual relationship of the designs of its former design director, Naoto Fukasawa, who has long since begun to work except that their influential, elitist design idiom has been translated to a complete world of daily needs. Naoto Fukasawa is an important ambassador for Japan's complex simplicity, with its mysterious, even sublime emotionalism. He worked with Muji, which can perhaps best be described as a Japanese IKEA, for many years, creating a whole world of sublime simplicity for living and dwelling.

His designs for B&B Italia, Lamy, Magis, and Artemide, among others, are also symbols of Japanese complexity in the simple. His most recent project for Alessi, a series of pots and pans, radiates precisely this idea from their conception down to the details. Fukasawa wanted to design a perfect collection, a collection that for him consists only of the parts that are absolutely necessary for cooking. “With this range of products I wanted to create tools that people can continue to use throughout the

years, rooting in their culture, repairing rather than replacing them, somehow even enjoying the signs of use they acquire over time, as habits and taste evolve,” as Fukasawa describes his concept on the Alessi website. The name of the series also stems entirely from the Japanese idea of characterizing everyday products: Shiba is a popular breed of dogs from the designer's native country that are thought to be especially intelligent.

Alessi's collaboration with Fukasawa is not its first with a Japanese designer. Several years earlier, there was the Fruit Basket project: a sugar bowl and creamer in stainless steel. The creator of this unbelievably Japanese-looking service was the Japanese architectural firm SANAA, founded by Kazuyo Sejima and her partner, Ryūe Nishizawa, in 1995. Although they had only a few built projects at the time, they quickly attracted international attention on the international architectural scene. In Europe, the firm became famous for its cubic structure for the Zollverein School in Essen, which was completed in 2006. Their prizewinning competition entry for the expansion of the Bauhaus-Archiv in Berlin was not ultimately commissioned. Their most famous work is the building for the Museum of Contemporary Art, combined of stacked and staggered cubes, also built in 2006. Kazuyo Sejima and Ryūe Nishizawa have espoused minimalism—albeit with a Japanese interpretation and rigor. Their favorite materials are exposed concrete, steel, aluminum, and glass. It may be the unusual appearance of the building, the feeling that one is participating in something essential by looking at it or using it, that distinguishes the art of these architects. The Pritzker Prize, the most important architecture honor in the world, was awarded to SANAA in 2010; in the almost unanimous judgment of the architecture world, in any case, they have earned it.

But Alberto Alessi is not the only one who admires the new generation of Japanese designers. Several important European design firms—such as Cappellini and LaPalma—are increasingly hiring Japanese designers for projects and collections. For example, Giulio Cappellini and the architect Oki Sato of Nendo developed the Ribbon Stool: a stool constructed from flat metal bands, which resembles a paper cutout pulled into the third dimension. For LaPalma, the designer Shin Azumi developed

a free form that looks as if it were folded from a single sheet of paper and translated into an unusual stool. Formed from a single piece of bentwood, no other elements are necessary to lend the AP Stool the necessary stability. An opening of the form at the most sensitive point structurally is, on the one hand, a technical necessity to produce it. On the other hand, it serves as a simple handle to carry it. Another example of this disembodied effect is Oki Sato's Cord Chair, which he designed in 2009 for Maruni, one of the oldest furniture manufacturers in Japan. The Cord Chair stands on maple legs just fifteen millimeters in diameter. The steel core inside the legs that provides the necessary stability cannot be seen. Even so, there has probably never been a chair more minimalistic than the Cord Chair. In contrast to the products of European minimalism, however, which are sometimes so frosty they leave the viewer cold, the Cord Chair is a deeply human object. It is, typically Japanese, a personality one encounters with a great deal of sympathy.

So the result of the collaboration between Maruni and Oki Sato can be described as almost exemplarily Japanese. The company is known for its will to perfection and its ability to take designs that designers have based on craft traditions and transfer them to industrial processes. That accounts for the very human appearance of the Cord Chair. Oki Sato sees the design as a clear declaration of faith in the Japanese culture of leaving out and at the same time of a concentration on the essential. In this view, emotional value results from things being liberated from the superfluous and the essence of objects is proverbially peeled free. Thus the truly simple is always the result of an intense and elaborate process. The viewers or users do not see that, but they feel it. It is the essence of the sublime that seizes them. If they have sufficient empathy, they will immediately develop an emotional access to products created in this way.

Any visit to Tokyo to appreciate the design and architecture would be incomplete without experiencing the Ginza, the city's exclusive shopping street. For years it has been a powerful magnet for the spectacular retail architecture of international luxury brands—usually of European provenance. There is no place in the world where the importance of architecture as a communication medium is

more clearly evident than here. Dior, Chanel, and Louis Vuitton have built fascinating media façades here. Renzo Piano designed a corner building of glass brick in the style of new objectivity for Hermès. Ben van Berkel is planning a bold interplay of concave and convex perforated façades for the new Louis Vuitton flagship store, in the style of the canvas pattern monogram typical of the brand. Among the special highlights of recent years is Crystal Forest that Tokujin Yoshioka designed for the crystal manufacturer Swarovski: a stalactite forest in metal, it stole the show from all the other brands. The showroom is entered through a hanging façade of folded sheet metal, and it begins to twinkle and glitter everywhere. Once again Yoshioka showed his interest in hanging structures, though this time not a polyester forest like that of 21\_21 Design Sight but rather crystal threads that condense into a chandelier that monopolizes everything.

One aspect of this trip to the land of sublime form has yet to be mentioned. The island empire of Japan, whose rulers decided at the beginning of the modern era to close themselves off from foreign influences and keep the culture of the divine people pure, developed, after it was forced to open to the outside in the nineteenth century, a special ability to reflect on Western influences and absorb them—as well as they could. That is true of the language, in which Western concepts, from German or English, for example, for which there was no Japanese equivalent were Japanized in a process of phonetic transformation. The same went for the aesthetic of Western industrial design, especially from the United States, which has flooded the country since the 1950s. One particular place to experience this Japanese ability to integrate the foreign into its forms is the Hotel Okura. It is located in the diplomatic district of the city—thus within walking distance of the imperial palace and Tokyu Station. The spacious hotel complex, dominated by two long, multistory modern buildings, is supplemented by a traditional Japanese garden. As you enter the lobby of the main building, time seems to stand still and your breathing ceases. The furniture, materials, colors, and arranged flowers transport the viewer into a scene that seems to have sprung from a film set of the 1960s.

Only two places in the world radiate a comparable magic. The Four Seasons restaurant in

New York's Seagram Building and the Hotel Okura. Just as in New York the modernism of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe—furnished with classics from the 1920s—has survived the decades as if vacuum-packed, the Okura has resisted any trend toward modernization. Japanese modernism began in the Okura, and it shows how different it is from its American/European pendant. Clearly, the same design principles have survived here that fundamentally distinguish design in Japan from design in the Western world. The Four Seasons in New York has the monumental and classicistic qualities of Mies's era; the Okura is dominated by earthy to powdery colors, geometric ornaments, and spartan-organic upholstered furniture that is more reminiscent of Scandinavian modernism. The interior of the Okura inimitably marks the beginning of the meeting of two worlds. Here the aesthetic traditions of Japan, but also its art, seem to absorb foreign influences into Japan's consensus society and reinterpret them in its own language. SANAA's Fruit Basket, Fukasawa's cookware, and Azumi's AP Stool are also examples of this typical fusion of our worlds. The themes may be Western and international, but their materialization is the expression of sublime Japanese form.

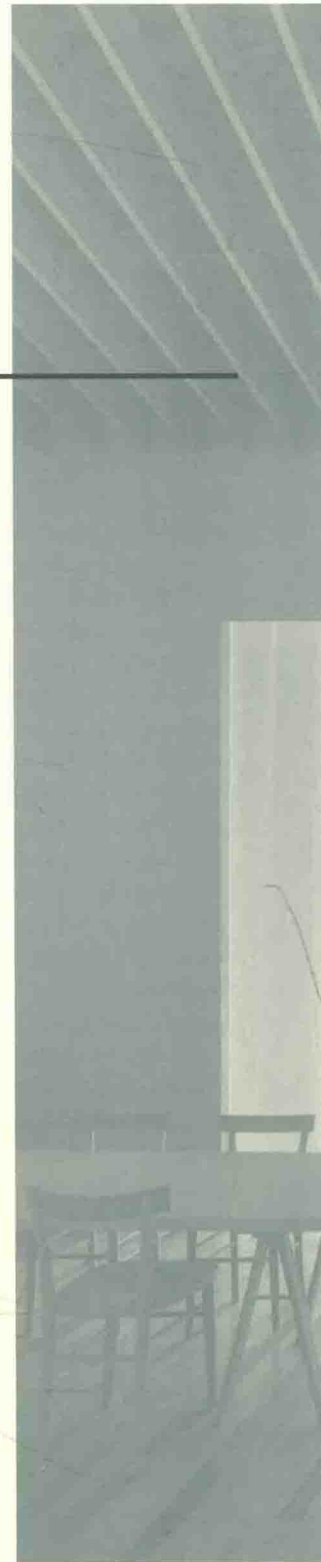
# //TRANSPARENCY //DISSOLVING BOUNDARIES //INSIDE—OUTSIDE

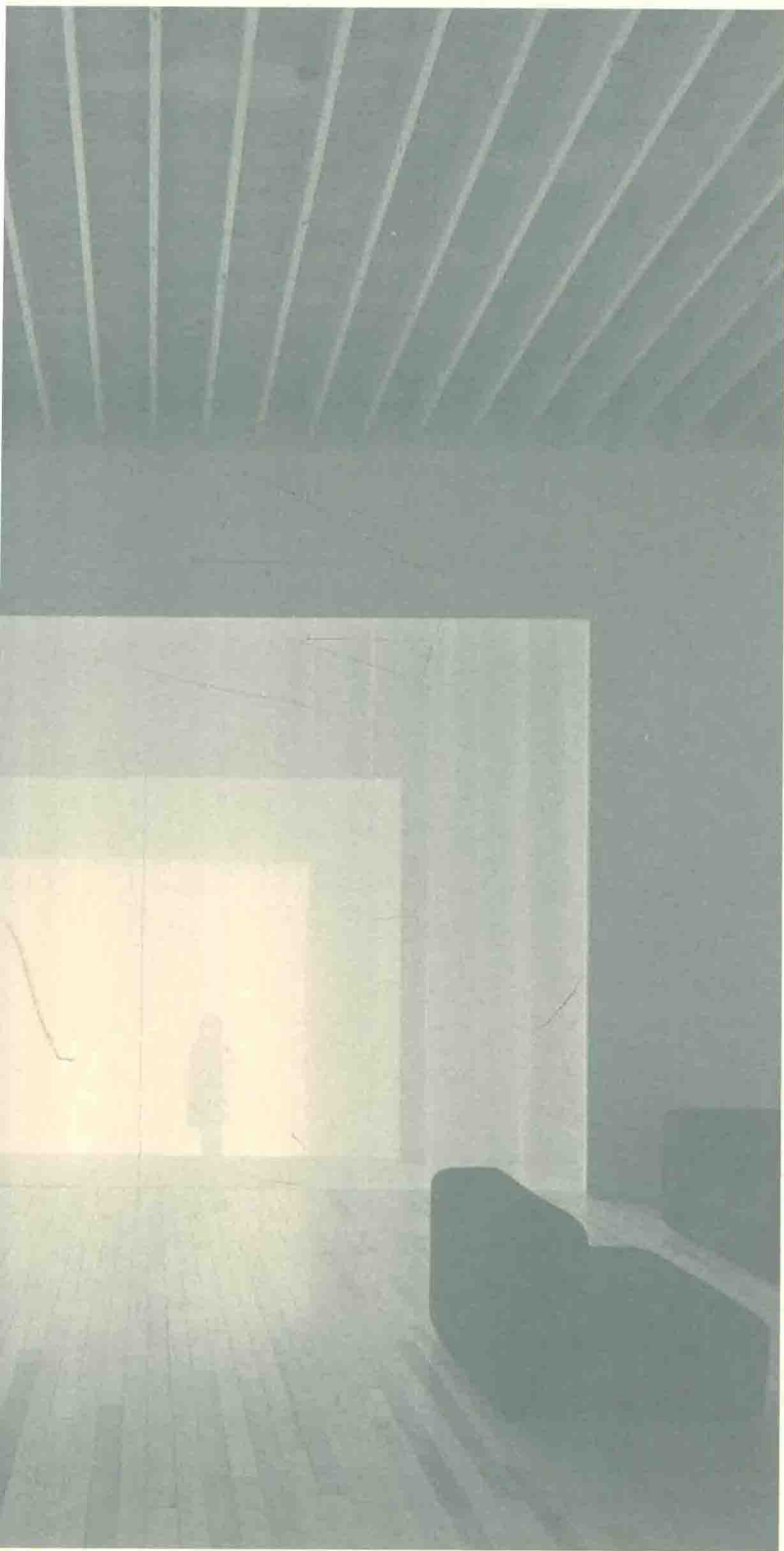
One of the recurring basic patterns in Japanese design is the delicate connection between exterior and interior. The exterior describes nature and the surroundings; the interior is the place for contemplation. Because, however, meditative observation in the interior is not infrequently focused on the experience of nature—that is, on the exterior—there is no clear separation between the two worlds. According to Japanese philosophy, a deeply felt connection to nature increases a person's mental and spiritual well-being. The room and nature, interior and exterior spaces, are connected to each other via a philosophical transition area, one that at the same time takes concrete form in the design. This transitional area is also defined as an in-between space, one that makes it possible to design a fluid transition between exterior and interior. Thus the room is integrated into nature and nature into the room. The space in between is thus an essential transformer of the idea that the outside does not exist without the inside, and vice versa. Only the space in between produces a harmonious whole of the two states of existence. Its significance is perhaps comparable only to the meaning of the rest in European classical music, as it sustains the arc of tension between the individual notes of a work. Without the rest, the experience of the music would simply be incomplete.

The Japanese idea of the space in between finds expression in the construction or design in a seemingly omnipresent transparency that as a formal principle is one of the dominant stylistic means of architects and designers. There is, however, also a very specifically Japanese notion of transparency. It cannot be compared to the transparency of Calvinistic culture, which consists in a visual revelation of all privacy by doing away with curtains and permitting a total view inward. The Japanese principle of transparency is rather a multilayered dramatization of a—to translate it into scientific terms—semipermeable membrane. Whether it is the paper walls, which allow light and shadows through but no details, the fine-grained, soft-looking concrete, or the roughed-up surfaces of powder-coated metals or plastic, the space in between is also a complex surface whose pores regulate communication between the core of the building or product and the outside world—in the sense of a process of selection.

It is fascinating to see how these ancient principles of Japanese aesthetics have survived up to the present day. Transparency, dissolving boundaries between inside and outside, the dramatization of surfaces as a space between spaces—all these things are revealed in current

Japanese design and, thanks to the popularity of the latter, have influenced the Western world as well. The work of the designer Tokujin Yoshioka, born in 1967, is one example. His preference for synthetic materials, which dominate nearly all his furniture, accessories, and interiors, would scarcely lead one to suspect that Yoshioka sees himself as a champion of the towering (sublime) quality of the natural. At first glance, the white surfaces of his objects, which play with light, usually either transparent or gleaming, seem quite artificial. Yoshioka caused an international sensation at the Design Miami fair in 2007. He presented his furniture designs in an artificially produced chaos: a whirlwind of millions of white plastic drinking straws. In Yoshioka's work, there is a second nature: a shimmering parallel world flooded with light. It consists of polyethylene, of paper, of glass, and of metal as well as of a wide variety





chair dramatized as public seating furniture in the then still new, trendy Tokyo neighborhood of Roppongi Hills in 2003. When it rained, the chair did indeed become imperceptible to passersby. The chair's name became its program. The explanation was a special chemical finishing of the glass that caused it to react to water. The interplay of visible material and the metalevel of our ideas of the beautiful, of the fortunate, or even of the sublime is a central motif of Yoshioka's work. For all the wealth of material in his synthetic worlds, his presentations serve above all to make the immaterial visible. If light were physical, it would be his preferred material.

The principles of transparency and the space in between are also evident in current Japanese architecture. Toyo Ito, a grandmaster of his métier, has attracted international attention over the past decade with his extraordinary perforated façades. He has planned and built spectacular retail projects for the brands Tod's and Mikimoto. Ito, who has been working on his own since 1971, at first under the name Urban Robot and since 1979 as Toyo Ito & Associates, Architects, initially focused on private homes. Later he

also applies to the building he completed for Tod's in 2004, located on one of Tokyo's most famous streets: the Omotesando in Aoyama. There Toyo Ito played with the surface of the building as an interim space that offers the viewer various views inward and outward. The design of the façade that covers the entire building is an abstracted silhouette of the trees on the street in front of it. But this borrowing from vegetation is merely formal in nature. The branched structure of the concrete has consequences for the building's structure: as load-bearing façade elements, they make it possible for the interior spaces to be entirely free of supports. The spaces in between the concrete construction are filled with glass flush with the exterior; the glass shimmers with a slight green tint and offers surprising views into the interior of the building. Both in this case and that of the perforated façade of sheet steel that recalls a leopard's spots, completed in 2005 for the Mikimoto showroom on the Ginza, one is struck by Ito's preoccupation with design principles borrowed from traditional Japanese design: transparency and translucency, direct and diffuse light, interior and exterior. The well-nigh infinite formal variation on these themes is something that connects Ito's otherwise very different buildings, and those of others as well. A direct comparison of the confrontation with neighboring buildings built by architects of the international avant-garde over the past ten years reveals an unparalleled quality of architectural surfaces.

of textiles. It is neither a reproduction nor a simulation of existing nature. No, in many of its presentations Yoshioka's parallel world looks better than the real world—white and clearer, almost like a pure space emotionalized with a great deal of love for detail. And, very matter-of-factly, his work is concerned with the meaning of the transition between his world and the real one. For example, he titled one of his early projects *Chair That Disappears in the Rain*. It consisted of a glass

referred to this very personal architecture as clothing for individuals in the atmosphere of the Japanese metropolis. Soon he was making a name for himself as a conceptual architect, whose works fused the physical and the virtual world—just another way of saying inside and outside. Ito uses the metaphor of simulation to explain what architecture can do. In this view, the built space is nothing other than the concretization of our idea for how a given place can be energized. This principle





## MOUNT FUJI ARCHITECTS STUDIO

### SAKURA HOME / OFFICE

| Meguro, Tokyo / Japan, 2006

Designing this home and home-office in a residential neighborhood where land costs rank among the highest in Tokyo, the architects were inspired by the sense of freedom and openness of the two classic glass houses by Mies van der Rohe and Philip Johnson, whose transparency was guarded by stands of trees. As a substitute for these woods and to allow the house to recuse itself amidst the densely built-up district in which it is located, Mount Fuji designed two large, stand-

alone, girdle-like walls measuring 7.5 and 5 m high respectively and consisting of a lace-like 3 mm thick steel sheet. Punched with holes in a floral pattern, a traditional Ise paper stencil pattern representing cherry blossoms, the panels filter light like sunshine dappling through foliage. Beyond the abstracted thicket of blossoms, Fuji provided as few signs and symbols of a house or household as possible.







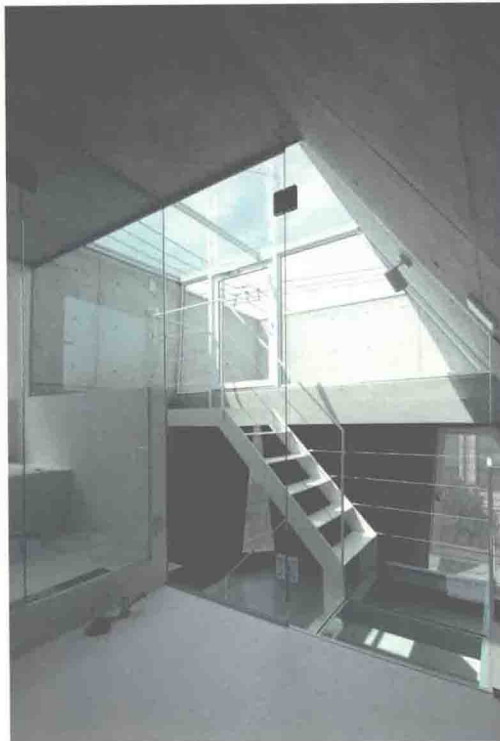
## A.L.X./ARCHITECT LABEL XAIN

*Junichi Sampei*

### HOUSE TOKYO

| Tokyo/Japan, 2010

Zoning restrictions and a severely narrow site shaped this unusual house: On the first floor, through a 30 cm thick interior wall, House Tokyo stands a meager 55 cm from a busy street. The sculpted façade features window openings that taper as they rise three stories, one wall that is triangular and another that cants inward almost five degrees. It also has a truncated northern corner, standing it in vivid contrast to its surrounding while enabling it to conform to city code. Its 78 square meters of reinforced concrete is screened from street and the elements via a perforated metal skin that abstracts and sculpts the structure into something monolithic with wall, window, and door details erased and no hint given as to its contents. Historically, the notional house has traditionally served as a white-washed fortress and a soft inside that protect its inhabitants from the city. Sampei's combination of concrete and iron interior and white exterior, however, turns the concept of house inside-out: The house's white (usually inner) lining faces outwards here while its concrete armature takes shelter inside.





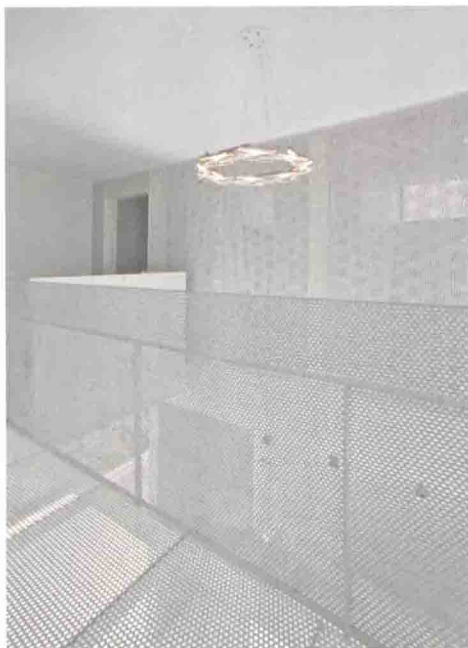
## STUDIOGREENBLUE

Mitsuharu Kojima &  
Wataru Kobayashi

### DISTANCE OF FOG

| Konosu City, Saitama / Japan, 2010

In Japan, cul-de-sacs are commonly used as gathering areas and children's playgrounds. In a suburban Tokyo cul-de-sac, among seven other single-family homes, this house's proximity to the road and neighbors severely diminished its privacy. At the client's request, the architects decided to manufacture a sense of personal distance from the world outside. Their solution borrowed from the image of someone peering through a fogbank. This approach interrupts sightlines without imposing a solid barrier, like a perceptual filter. They moved the house to the back of the lot, deepening the front yard and then used sleight of hand to manufacture a perception of distance: they separated the private room by using strategically located, overlapping perforated metal screens, each one with a unique pattern. The overlapping screens form a moiré pattern similar to a fog that constantly shifts according to the angle of the viewer. Seen from the exterior, it generates a twinkling pattern at night. Inside, a soft swimming light pattern is filtered onto the wall, floors, and ceiling as if it is reaching the inhabitants underwater.



## JUNIO DESIGN

Jun Hashimoto

### 01 | NET CHAIR

| 2010

An easy chair made from a single sheet of industrial stainless steel serves as a seat but also as an answer to the query: How would furniture evolve if built from a minimum of processing and material? Hashimoto cut and folded a sheet of mesh, and then simply tied it with fine wire.

### 02 | WEB CHAIR

| 2009

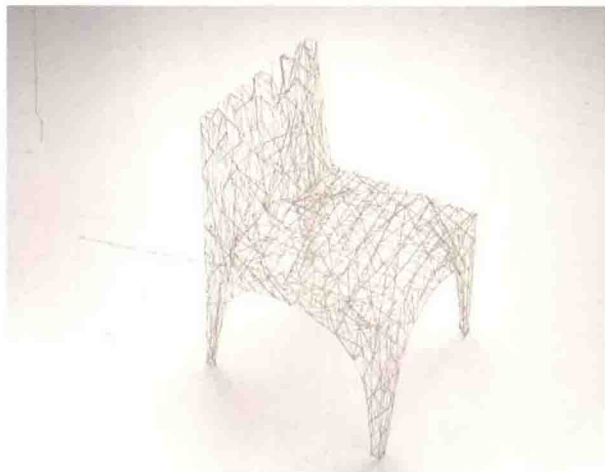
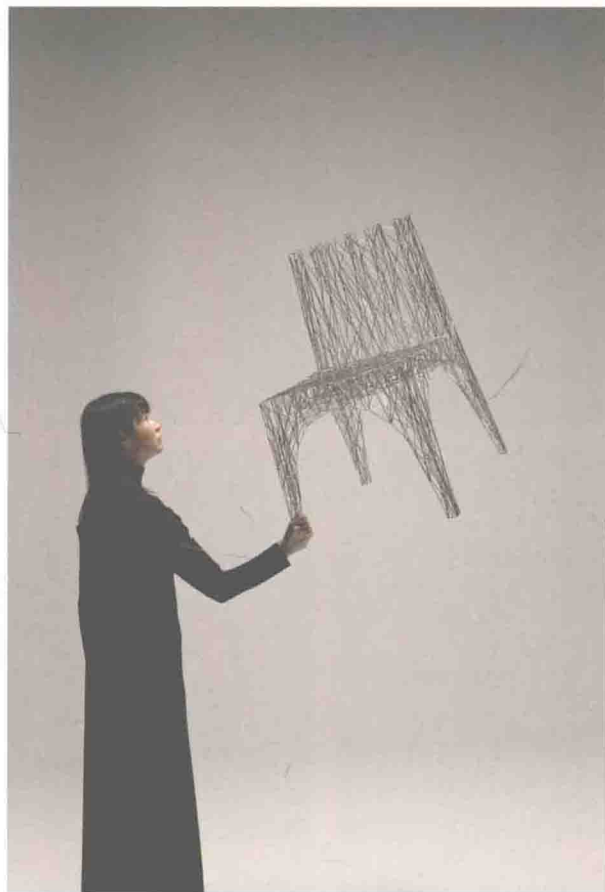
This mirror-finish stainless-steel seat is an experiment in using as little material and production effort as possible in order to generate a maximum of texture and minimum of weight. Web weighs only 2.2 kg and is made from

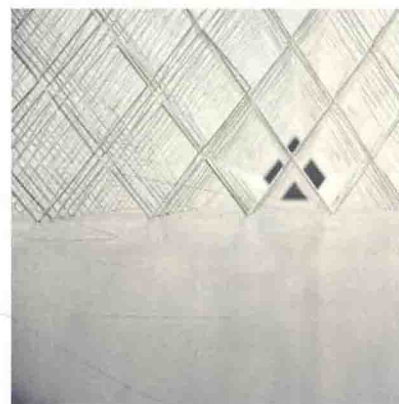
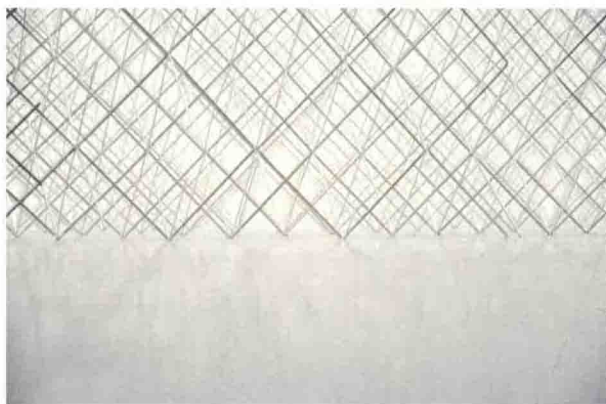
140,000 mm of 1.6 mm wide stainless-steel wire. The fine irregularly welded wires of Web—2000 welding points hold the chair together—seem to appear and disappear like the filaments of a spider web. The mirror finish of the stainless steel means that the outline of the chair blurs under strong light and reflects its surroundings, changing in different settings and changing those settings, in its turn. The project expresses the designer's hope that the era of machine-made architecture will come to a close and that the public will begin to build with their own hands again.



01

02





## RYUJI NAKAMURA & ASSOCIATES

### CORNFIELD

| Tokyo/Japan, 2010

Nakamura's *Cornfield* is sown with paper, its planar shape consisting of triangles made up of 30°, 60° and 90° angles. Although the 100-cubic-meter volume is lined uniformly with paper frames, it provides a changing perspective as visitors pass, their eyes ranging over the deep, cross-hatched pattern. Nakamura's installations are deep breaths of air and light and

homages to geometry and though they are soft looking and lightweight, they resonate intensely in any space they colonize, as far removed from paper's origins as can be imagined. The designer is constantly pushing the limits of his medium, exploring through architectural pieces, sculpture and, even load-bearing furniture, the strengths and weaknesses of paper.