JAPANESE ARCHITECTURE AND GLOBALIZATION

"It is precisely in, and through, an understanding of alien cultures that we can come to a more sensitive and critical understanding of our own culture and of those prejudices that may lie hidden from us."

Richard J. Bernstein

Japanese architecture both as a present practice and a course of history provides us with particular features and unique examples. On the one hand, they are deeply rooted in cultural patterns highlighting important differences between the approaches to design in the East and the West; on the other hand, they are also derivative of Japan's contemporary conditions: advanced technology, modes of production and consumption, social order, systems of urbanization, etc., which altogether have by now yielded one of the most innovative, future oriented, and critical practices in the world of urban architecture today.

However, since the early 1980s an increasing number of Japanese architects do work not only at home in Japan, but also abroad. In fact, some of the most prominent designers, such as Tadao Ando, Shigeru Ban, Arata Isozaki, Toyo Ito, Kengo Kuma, Kisho Kurokawa, Fumihiko Maki, Nikken Sekkei Ltd., and SANAA produce most of their architectures in foreign countries, as far away as Europe, the United States, China and other parts of Asia, Australia, as well as the Middle East. At the same time, others, like Jun Aoki, Atelier Bow Wow, Sou Fujimoto, Yoshio Taniguchi are also active overseas.

The first, lecture part of the course your instructor will introduce the postwar developments of Japanese architecture and urbanism, with references to historic examples, while the second, seminar part will give students the opportunity to research selected examples of Japanese architects' architecture in the global world. Students will make Power Point presentations about their assigned buildings and complexes touching upon all aspects of their realization starting with the design through construction and use, in the context of the architect's oeuvre. Students can rely on any available material, books and magazines and very importantly, the internet.

The class meets weekly on Tuesdays for three hours, when presentations will be followed by discussions. Students are required to keep their notebooks rigorously up-to-date. Each student presentation will be submitted in low-res PDF format both to your instructor as well as to other classmates for their record and evaluation. Final grades will be based on these individual presentations and the quality of a small-scale physical model of one building, what each student can select from his or her previously presented examples.

Wishing you an informative, exciting, and successful semester.

Botond Bognar
Professor and Edgar A. Tafel Endowed Chair in Architecture
University Scholar
Laureate, Architectural Institute of Japan Special Prize