Center of Japanese Architecture and Urbanism in Tokyo

Tokyo is one of the largest metropolises in the world and Japanese Architecture is one of the most prominent among contemporary practices today. Yet, apart from smaller galleries dedicated to the cause of architecture, there is no up-to-date representative venue to the display of Japan's rich history and tremendous recent progress in shaping the human environment. In the 2014 Spring Semester Bognar studio will design an urban complex, where the city and its architecture is introduced and celebrated.

Tokyo’s “empty” Center, the huge Imperial Palace compound off-limit to the public.
THE SITE

The site of the project is at one of Tokyo's busiest intersections, the one between Aoyama-dori Avenue and Omotesando Boulevard. Aoyama-dori, connecting the Imperial Palace area and Ginza with Shibuya sub-center is running in the SW-NE direction, while Omotesando connecting Aoyama-dori with the Yoyogi Olympic Stadiums and Meiji Shinto Shrine compound is running in the direction of SE-NW.

The area of Omotesando, Tokyo’s Champs Elysees, is crowded by many outstanding pieces of architecture by both Japanese and foreign architects. These buildings include:

- Kengo Kuma: Nezu Art Museum, 2009
- Tadao Ando: Collezione, 1990
- Jun Mitsui: CARTIER Boutique (The Jewel of Aoyama), 2005
- Hezog-DeMeuron: Prada Boutique, 2003
- Fumihiko Maki: Spiral Building, 1985
- Kengo Kuma: One Omotesando (LVMH), 2004
- Toyo Ito: TOD’S Omotesando Building, 2004
- Jun Aoki: Louis Vuitton Omotesando, 2002
- Tadao Ando: Omotesando Hills, 2006
- SANAA: DIOR Omotesando, 2004
- MVRDV: GYRE Omotesando, 2008
- Tadao Ando: hhstyle.com/Casa, 2005
- Kazuyo Sejima: hhstyle.com / Furniture Showroom, 2000
- Creative Designers International: AUDI Showroom (The Iceberg), 2006
- Kenzo Tange: Yoyogi Olympic Stadiums, 1964
The SITE of the new Architecture Center is comprised of three parts:

- **1st**: facing Aoyama-dori Avenue, and its size is: **16.5’ x 272’** (5 m x 83 m)
- **2nd**: across a very narrow ~’ (4 m) wide lane without sidewalks, faces both the narrow lane and a small plaza along Omotesando Boulvard, and its size is: **85’ x 112.5’** (26 m x 34.5 m)
- **3rd** across another narrow 10’ (3.1 m) wide lane, is: **33’ x 174’** (10 m x 53 m).

In other words, your site, which in fact is: 205.5’ (48 m) at the SW side, 272’ (83 m) at the SE side, 174’ at the NW side north corner of the intersection is intersected by two narrow lanes. A small Buddhist Temple and cemetery is to the north of the site.

The site is well served by three Metro lines: the Ginza, Hanzomon and Chiyoda lines, which run under the two Avenues. One entrance of the joint Omotesando Station is right in front of the site on Omotesando Boulvard (the underground station complex is pinkish in color. The three components of the site can be connected both underground and above the small streets leaving the street traffic unaffected.
The current condition of the site area seen from the south corner of the intersection.

The site is seen from the same direction but from the air.
PROGRAM

Entrance Hall / Lobby/ Reception
Exhibition Area (permanent)
Exhibition Area (temporary)
Lecture Hall for 150 persons
Information and Computer Center / Library
Banquet Hall
Small Restaurant / Kitchen, etc
Coffee Shop / Drink Bar /Lounge
Bookstore
Offices
Service areas / washrooms, etc
Storage
Some retail shops / boutiques
Outdoor areas
Plaza / garden (if any)
Rooftop Terrace
Direct access to underground Metro Station
No parking is necessary on site

Program size can be adjusted according to interpretations of site and proposed design. A 16-inch scale physical (built) site- and architecture-model is mandatory. The studio will be introduced by Power Point presentations by Prof. Bognar. Because of the size and complexity of the project, students will work in teams of two.

The studio aims at attracting creative / bold designers, who are excited to take the challenge of a unique site and program in a most dynamic urban context of today.

Wishing you the best of success, I look forward to working with you.

Prof. B. Bognar,
Edgar A. Tafel Endowed Chair in Architecture
Tokyo is a dynamic, multifaceted, and futuristic, if not the most beautiful city with spectacular contemporary architecture and an exceptionally prominent contemporary culture. There are several very important factors, which have been conducive to the unique disposition and remarkable success of Tokyo as a world city. First of all, one has to acknowledge the important role what Japan as an economic super power, with its financial and investment policies, wealth, as well as industrial and technological might, particularly in regard to information processing, has played in Tokyo’s maturation, as it has also shaped the developments of architecture, urban design, and ultimately, the entire course of urbanization of Tokyo.

Tokyo has been shaped as much by Oriental as by Western ideologies, that is to say, both by traditionally evolved values or modes of life, social or urban conditions, and the most innovative aspirations or, the most dynamic forces that now increasingly include the role of information, media and other futuristic technologies. Thus, despite its extensive and radical transformations, especially in the last thirty years, Tokyo has retained its pre-modern, Edo Period (1603-1868) urban structure and predisposition as an Asian city, as well as its longstanding mentality that favors the situational over the predetermined orders, and prefers an “integration without synthesis.”

Tokyo continues to develop, as before, piecemeal (or by way of a fuzzy logic), and not as a measured whole. Hearkening back to the times of Edo, Tokyo’s predecessor, this is an urbanism where the parts are always more in focus than the whole, and where experimentation and innovation in architecture and urbanism today are not merely options but in fact almost unavoidable necessities; Tokyo is a city of tremendous resilience, wherein an air of impermanence prevails.

The “essence” of Tokyo lay hidden, is “invisible,” and represented by the urban land--its scarcity, distribution, high value, etc.--that is, by its prevalent “chaotic” structural system, rather than the permanence of its individual buildings; the city is better defined by its events, the flow of information, human activities, fast and continuous change, and a penchant for novelty than by the enduring physical or material essence of its built fabric.

Tokyo remains a city of processes (as opposed to a monument or artifact), a huge “theater” (as opposed to a “museum”), an in(de)finite city, a “dream machine,” where urban reality and fiction form an inseparable unity. Within such non-modern context, Tokyo has also produced an urban and architectural culture that--despite, or perhaps exactly because of its many unusual features and contradictions, but by all means exciting world-class qualities, represents the cutting edge in design and execution.

In 1964 Tokyo became the first Asian city to host the Olympic games and now it has been selected once again as the site of the 2020 Olympics. This event, like the one some 56 years ago, is expected to give a boost to the city’s architecture and urban development. For 1964 the elevated expressway system and the first high-speed train line were constructed, while Kenzo Tange built the Yoyogi Olympic Stadiums--which is justly one of the 20th Century’s most outstanding and celebrated architectural representatives, among many other innovative structures in the city and the country.

In the final analysis, today we witness the twenty-first century, with all its promises, doubts and contradictions, flourishing in Japan, and manifesting itself with a special intensity in Tokyo.