

## THE AMERICAN VIEW OF A JAPANESE WAVE

Andrew MacNair

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A notion prevails that waves keep increasing in a regular series until the maximum arrives and the series begins again. No doubt when two waves coalesce they form a larger one, but this does not occur at fixed intervals. The most common theory is that the tenth wave is the largest, but Tennyson says the ninth in *The Holy Grail*.

*And then the two dropt to the cove and watched the great sea fall,  
Wave after wave, each mightier than the last,  
Till the last, a ninth one, gathering half the deep  
And full of voices, slowly rose and plunged roaring,  
And all the wave was a flame.*

### An east coast report

Now, ten years later, the battle cry of the hippies from the riotous sixties of *Doing Your Thing* has struck the front cover of the most recent *Time* magazine. A photograph of Philip Johnson cradling a model of the AT & T Building while standing on the roof of a New York tower with Rockefeller Center in the background announces the first cover story of the New Year about *U. S. Architects*. They report that *U. S. Architects* are finally doing their thing. They are celebrating a new freedom to make anything, anywhere, and in any way. Modernism is dead they say. Regionalism, historicism, and ornamentation are alive and well. Everything can be architecture. Architecture is everywhere. And anybody can do it. And it is called Post-Modernism.

Now in the midst of all the hype about the rage of a new eclecticism within American architecture, *A New Wave of Japanese Architects* has quietly traveled to ten American cities with five architects lecturing on their work to provide one outline of the current climate in Japan. The climate is very different there with Western modernism providing a cloak for an Eastern eclecticism. Accompanying the New Wave lecture four was a series of ten small exhibitions of the recent architecture by eleven architects. The lecture tour and the exhibition were organized by the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies in cooperation with The Japan Society, and with the generous assistance of Arata Isozaki and Fumihiko Maki in planning and coordinating the Wave. The New Wave was the first segment of a program by The National Architecture Exchange of the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies to bring new ideas about architecture to America. The work of the ten architects is documented in a catalogue published by the Institute with an introduction by Kenneth Frampton.

The New Wave was formed as a way to introduce to America one particular profile of a new generation of younger architects in Japan. The purpose of the Institute in bringing the Wave to America was to define the issues of debate within Japan between opposing schools of thought regarding their position towards their Eastern roots and traditions as opposed to the contemporary influences of Western culture and architecture. The New Wave, however, presented the work of eleven architects who represent a broad overview as well as a homogeneous group. The Japanese Wave broke from the Pacific onto the beaches of California in a series of undulations which are still being felt, and only just beginning to be understood. Their significance and influence on the thinking and discourse about architecture are difficult to measure at this time, but it is clear that the breaking of the Wave elucidates remarkable contrasts and comparisons within Japanese architecture today.

The New Wave of Japanese Architecture arrived in a curious order. We know that order of a wave in the ocean is based on the random and unpredictable nature of the surface of the sea. Yet this sequence was conceptually vague, giving this Wave a seemingly haphazard outline of ripples, white caps, and rollers. The surf was up. And the Japanese advanced across the land with Takefumi Aida at the bow as pilot and Arata Isozaki in the stern as anchorman.

Takefumi Aida began the series with his audio-visual presentation called *Silence*. After opening with a provocative and witty statement about his work, he wove a triad of images about the relationships and cross-referen-

ces between his work and the forms, images, and symbols in Japanese culture. Gradually his pyramid of images introduced his ideas about an architecture of silence. The presentation was didactic and serious, and yet contained entertaining moments of humor. It was quiet, yet powerful. It was visually complex, yet conceptually clear. Aida's lecture set the stage for the work of Takeyama, Fujii, Hara, and Isozaki.

Minoru Takeyama followed on the crest of the first wave with a lecture on *Heterology in Architecture*. He was eloquent and articulate about describing his projects but lacked the intellectual rigor that his writings and his buildings project. His work is intriguing and complex but deserves thorough dissections through a more microscopic examination of each project rather than through a general survey. For example, the Pepsi Canning Plant was shown only in distant photographs without examining it in detail in plan, up close in elevation, and inside. Takeyama was clearly being very cautious about what he said, for what he writes is far more analytical and probing than what his lecture revealed to us on stage.

Hiromi Fujii then arrived to present a written text about *Existential Architecture and the Role of Geometry*. His presentation was serious and thoughtful. Fujii presented very intense projects studied, examined and dissected with great rigor. His introspectiveness, his earnestness, and his quizzical expressions indicated an architect obsessed with a few ideas about the essence of architecture rather than the entire spectrum of possibilities. His lecture was seemingly academic with the labored reading of his text, yet the work was profound. He shifted from his first statements about his philosophy to literal descriptions of the practical matters of the house. His work, however, does speak for itself.

The fourth wave crashed on the California coast with a bundle of energy and joy as Hiroshi Hara dashed off his expose about the development of his practice in two phases, an earlier one of ten years ago with a few large monolithic structures, and a later one of small domestic landscapes wedged between blank walls. His reversal in the second phase of the building indicated the differences between the Sixties and the Seventies. His lecture was a quick, sharp, and lucid comment on the work as it progressed chronologically which illuminated the evolution of his ideas about an anti-traditional architecture.

The final surge from the Pacific broke with Arata Isozaki, bringing a remarkably condensed summary of the current context for Japanese architecture. He reviewed the work of the entire group both in tour and the exhibition with poignant remarks about the starry-eyed vision of travel agents and tourists who see Japan as an idealized world of perfect postcard landscapes against the reality of its slums, crowds, and congestion. Isozaki briefly showed his work as part of the continuous struggle within this land of environmental and social crises. He was closely the anchorman for the wave.

The exhibition was organized to travel to nine American cities hosting the lecture tour. Each city received one panel by each architect to exemplify his work. Even though the exhibition appeared to be quite modest, the comparison between the boards of the ten architects provided a quick means for understanding where the lecturer positioned himself within the current contest. After the lecture tour was completed, the exhibitions were assembled in total in New York at the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies. The work of the New Wave was organized by age starting with Fumihiko Maki and ending with Atelier Zo. Arrangement by chronology was an attempt to place the work in the most neutral sequence possible without making editorial comment on possible groupings, interpretations, and directions.

However, one possible division of thought within the Wave is that of the two major universities represented among the ten architects. According to discussions with Takefumi Aida, the architects from Tokyo University maintain very different postures towards architecture than those from Waseda University. The work of Tange, Maki, Isozaki, Hara, and Ito seem to consider architecture from a highly formal, *intellectualized* and refined position. The work of Takeyama, Aida, Fujii, Ishiyama, and Team Zoo represent a set of ideas about architecture from a more metaphysical and theoretical point-of-view. Even though the architecture from Kobe University by Mozuna and the self thought Ando represent current thought of two independent architects one could categorize their work into the two groups according to their philosophies about design. Mozuna lies more closely to the Waseda school of thought, while Ando seems closer to the

Tokyo School. A primary discrepancy between the two schools is that in the Tokyo group the architecture itself seems to be generated by formal implications of the geometry to attain an abstract, yet poetic level. Their written text, lectures, and descriptions, are secondary to the architecture, and their drawings are poetic renderings made after the fact of building the project, and do not appear to act as a means towards an end. While in the Waseda group, the relationship between the word and the image is much more closely allied. The word acts as the cue for the form. The words act as metaphors for making a literary storyline of architecture. The texts are almost scripts for the making and the understanding of their work. Even in the case of Fujii, the text is critical to the complete understanding of the meaning of his work. With Aida, the calligraphic brush drawings present literal ideograms for the anthropomorphic facades. Even their drawings are presented as a direct parallel for the communication of their ideas about their work.

*In this issue, Arquitectura includes three articles which discuss various facets of the history of architecture and planning in Spain.*

#### CARTOGRAPHY OF MADRID

*Alfonso Alvarez Mora*

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Studies of urban development have become increasingly important over the past years in many disciplines such as geography, economics, sociology, history, etc. A basic tool necessary for the study of the growth and development of urban areas is found in the analysis of plans and maps. With this in mind, the Professional Association of Architects of Madrid has prepared an extensive book entitled, Basic Cartography of the City of Madrid which offers a wholistic view of the process of outward growth and urban transformations. The plans found in the book cover the period from the XVII century to the present and provide a complete reference book for the analysis of the development of Madrid.

#### FRANCISCO SABATINI: ARQUITECTO MADRILEÑO

*Carlos Sambricio*

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To commemorate the bicentennial of the Puerta de Alcalá, one of the main gateways of the city of Madrid, Carlos Sambricio speaks of the importance of Italian architect Sabatini in the definition of the architecture of the 1700s in Madrid. Published in this issue are some of the various projects which Sabatini proposed for the Puerta de Alcalá as well as the General Hospital and Customs House. They show, in terms of composition and space, a late Baroque influence and a separation from the clear forms of the Age of Reason which dominated Spanish architecture at that time.

#### URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN SPANISH CITIES DURING THE 19th CENTURY

*Francisco Calvo Serraller*

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The Industrial Revolution has been proven the decisive factor which brought about significant changes in the course of the development of cities. Author, Francisco Calvo, poses the question of how this premise can be applied to the history of development in Spain. The Industrial Revolution arrived to Spain much later than other countries. The cause of this and in turn the unusual development patterns found in Spain can be linked to the War of Independence, the absolute rule of Ferdinand and the weak political and economic situation of that era. The author presents a detailed analysis of 1) the unique factors affecting Spanish urban development in the XIX

century 2) the antecedents of Urban reform and 3) the impact of 'master plans of the XIX century development.

#### GRID HOUSE

*Michael McDonough, artista*

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«Grid House is a nineteenth century red shingled New England farmhouse and barn which have been painted flat white and overlaid with a black painted grid. In its realized form, the grid is perversely unrelenting as it shifts plane and appears and disappears around window panes and spacial intervals. Its juxtaposition with the compositionally arbitrary forms of vernacular architecture results in a visual richness... The visual information is constantly restructured for the viewer within the frames created by the intersecting lines. The grid, which is static as a form is perceived as dynamic... Grid House breaks away from traditional approaches to facade. The project is not concerned with architecturally determinate iconographies of function, construction, or pictorial representation. It explores psychological and perceptual issues as a basis for architectural communication.»

#### THE NECESSITY FOR DRAWING: TANGIBLE SPECULATION

*Michael Graves*

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This article by Michael Graves first published in A. D. is made available in its translated form to Spanish readers.

The text deals with the speculative nature of architectural drawings or the ability to explore a thought through drawing. Good drawing, states Graves, goes beyond simple information, rather it is a process of reciprocity between mind and act which allows the drawing to develop and express its own meaning.

Three basic types of drawings are defined; the referential sketch, a generally fragmentary drawing which may be thought of as the architect's record of discovery; the preparatory study which documents the process of inquiry and the definitive drawing which is the final and detailed idea which serves to answer questions about the built form rather than to pose them.

Graves illustrates his theoretical framework and the importance of the process of drawing with the discussion and illustration of his project for the Crook's House.

#### THE RENOVATION OF THE AREA ORCASUR

*Luis Azurmendi*

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The renovation of the poorer fringe areas of Madrid is perhaps one of the most conflictive problems facing the city today. Luis Azurmendi in his article states that this situation which at one time was represented as sporadic incidents is now a generalized and widespread phenomenon.

The area, Orcasur, located on the southern edge of Madrid was classed as a directed population area in the 50s and experienced the construction of temporary housing for lower income families who were forced to give up land for new construction. The temporary nature of the housing became permanent with time and a stable social structure evolved. In 1976 the process for the renovation of the area and the construction of remaining open sites began with plans and proposed housing projects which are illustrated in this issue. The programs for the housing projects were defined in collaboration with the Neighborhood Association which gave its approval along with Administration approval to the projects in November 1978. Unfortunately the current situation is one of doubt. The typical bureaucratic labyrinth of public procedures and new laws plus restrictive financing schemes may doom the future of these much needed housing projects.