The Past in the Present Practices of Japanese Architecture

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.

During the Fall Semester of 2018, the focus of investigation is on the ways historic (cultural) modes of shaping the human environment in Japan in the past are informing, and to what degree, the current practices of the most prominent Japanese architects both at home and abroad, on the global stage of architecture.

The course has two parts: first, the instructor provides introductory lectures in about half of the weekly three-hour classes about the pre-modern (historic), modern, and “postmodern” developments of architecture and urbanism in Japan with selected examples along with the theoretical / philosophical backgrounds that guided their creation. Students are required to record each of these lectures in their notebooks, which they need to submit at the end of the semester for evaluation as a part of their final grades. These lectures, amounting to six or seven weeks should provide the proper context within which students’ individual research projects can proceed.

Accordingly, in the second part of the semester, during six or seven sessions, students will conduct research projects, one for each class. These projects will be assigned at the beginning of the semester to allow students to have an early start of getting familiar with their particular subjects and a longer time to conduct the research. After each class, these presentations are submitted in electronic form to both the instructor for evaluation and to every student in the class for their record and learning.

In addition to students’ research presentations, there is a required final, five- to six-page paper on the topic related to student’s weekly presentations. Since the subject of each study is extensive and complex, students are paired in *teams of two* to accomplish the required high-quality result in timely fashion. Building a physical scale model about one of the buildings, selected by each team individually, is also necessary.

**Instructor’s lectures will address such topics as:**

**Religious architecture:** Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples
**Residential architecture:** *shinden, shoin*, and *sukiya* types of architecture and their gardens
**Urbanization in premodern times in Japan and the phenomenon of Tokyo as world city**
**Modernization after the mid-nineteenth century till World War II**
**Postwar reconstruction:** the modern architectures of Kenzo Tange, Kunio Maekawa, etc.
**The activities of the Metabolists in the 1960s and of the New Wave in the 1970s**
**The architectures of Fumihiko Maki, Arata Isozaki, Tadao Ando, the ArchiteXt Group, etc.**
**The building boom of the bubble era in the 1980s -1990s**
**The new realities for architecture after the burst of the “bubble”**
**The phenomenon of increasing globalization of Japanese architecture**

**Students will research the work of the following architects:**

**Nikken Sekkei:** Fumihiko Maki; Arata Isozaki; Tadao Ando; Yoshio Taniguchi; Toyo Ito; Kengo Kuma; SANAA; Shigeru Ban; and Riken Yamamoto

Botond Bognar
Professor and Edgar A. Tafel Endowed Chair in Architecture
Kengo Kuma – Portland Japanese Garden Cultural Village, Portland, OR., 2017 (©Bognar)

Toyo Ito – Taichung National Grand Theater, Taichung, Taiwan, 2017 (©Bognar)