

YOSIZAKA Takamasa Panorama World: from life-size to the earth

Sat. 19 March – Sun. 19 June, 2022

Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo, Exhibition Gallery 1F

Chapter 1: Beginnings

This chapter presents a chronology of the life of YOSIZAKA Takamasa, from his birth to the peace education he received in Geneva, Switzerland as a child, his encounters with various regions of the country as a student under architect KON Wajiro, and his mentor-student relationship with the French pioneer of modern architecture, Le Corbusier.

Born in Koishikawa Ward, Tokyo in 1917, YOSIZAKA Takamasa was the eldest son of YOSIZAKA Shunzo, a bureaucrat in the Ministry of Home Affairs, and Hanako, the second daughter of MITSUKURI Kakichi, a zoologist. Between the years 1920 to 1932, YOSIZAKA lived with his family in Switzerland on two separate occasions. From there, he continued his studies in England, returning to Japan after completing his international peace education and achieving proficiency in European languages. He went on to study at Waseda University Senior High School, and later obtained a higher education at Waseda University.

During World War II, YOSIZAKA was drafted to mainland China, where he penned a resolution for his future: "I will work on architecture for the sake of mutual understanding and peace."

After the war, in the Hyakunin-cho district of Shinjuku Ward, Tokyo, YOSIZAKA built barracks on the site of his former home that had been burnt to the ground and took up the task of reconstruction.

With his grant from the French government, Yosizaka went on to study in France, serving as an apprentice for Le Corbusier. He then returned to Japan for an appointment at Waseda University as a professor of architecture, and expanded his activities to writing, architectural design, and regional planning.

In his forties, YOSIZAKA again ventured out into the world, traversing the continents of Africa and North America, serving on assignment in Argentina for two years and subsequently participating in cross-border exchanges with India and China. Here, we trace his dynamic activities around the globe.

At each chapter of his life, YOSIZAKA self-published books covering his studies abroad in France, his assignment in Argentina, and his encounters with the continents. For this exhibit, we present "*Uika tachi no Ohanashi*" (*The story of Uika*), his depiction of an Argentine myth as a Möbius Strip.

Chapter 2: YOSIZAKA House

"Aru Jyukyo" (A Certain House) is the title of a small book YOSIZAKA published in 1960 that summarized the process of building his YOSIZAKA House in the district of Hyakunin-cho in Tokyo's Shinjuku Ward from the inception of its design through to its completion. The home in which he had lived in since his childhood had been destroyed by fire in wartime. Repatriating after the war, YOSIZAKA erected barracks on the site and took up residence there.

Soon after, he left Japan for a two-year study in France from 1950, and while apprenticing at the atelier of Le Corbusier, he worked on a design for a new residence to be built upon the ruins of Hyakunin-cho. Construction on the YOSIZAKA House began immediately upon his return to Japan and took approximately two years to complete. It is the first concrete residence in Japan to be built on an "artificial ground." After its completion, it was visited by Le Corbusier while he was in Japan for the construction of The National Museum of Western Art. In 1962, YOSIZAKA set up his own practice, Atelier U, in the yard. Without a gate or fence, the freely accessible, open space of the YOSIZAKA House attracted guests from all walks of life, including students, architects, and visitors from abroad.

This chapter presents a full-scale reproduction of the YOSIZAKA House and yard. On display in the garden area, which was open to the public, are YOSIZAKA's books and other items related to his life and practice. YOSIZAKA's architectural philosophy of "the earth belongs to all" is conveyed throughout the YOSIZAKA House. The house was both the point of origin of his travels around the world, and the base for his design activities.

Chapter 3: The Idea of Architecture

In 1954, when YOSIZAKA began designing the URA House, OTAKE Juichi joined forces, and the two became lifelong collaborators. As leaders of a five-member team, they founded the YOSIZAKA Laboratory and began designing. With dedication and ambition, they produced works from residential design to public architecture, including the Japanese Pavilion for the Venice Biennale, schools, and city halls, among other institutional facilities. Organic forms expressed in concrete became a distinctive feature of YOSIZAKA's designs that had not existed in the works of other architects of the same period. Also characteristic of his work is the development of a modular system for dimensioning in design and the practice of a free design philosophy, which he inherited from Le Corbusier.

In the 1960s, the group was reorganized as "Atelier U", with an increasing number of apprentices with diverse perspectives who came to gather around YOSIZAKA. At Atelier U,

the team put into place a theoretical practice invented by YOSIZAKA called "Discontinuous Unity", in which each team member independently proposes their design ideas, and form is discovered collectively through repeated discussions that take place around three-dimensional conceptual building models.

Primarily, the distinctions of the applied theory of Discontinuous Unity are the way in which the topography is utilized in encountering the natural environment and the details of connections between physical design elements and human form are considered at actual scale. This chapter presents hand-drawn plans and sketches, as well as photographs of representative buildings designed by YOSIZAKA and Atelier U. Models representing the concrete structures were used to reproduce the architectural framework, which is otherwise difficult to decipher from the exterior of the completed work. We also unearth the assembly of the "artificial ground."

Chapter 4: Mountains, Snow and Ice, and Architecture

YOSIZAKA's first mountaineering experience as a child in Switzerland led to his passion for mountaineering, which eventually inspired his activities in the mountaineering club at Waseda University. He is said to have been even more enthusiastic about mountaineering than he was about architecture, having organized expeditions across the African continent, climbing Mount Kilimanjaro, crossing the North American continent, and climbing Denali (formerly known as Mount McKinley).

Acquired at the risk of his life, YOSIZAKA's knowledge of nature led him to research the rural dwellings of arctic regions, and ultimately to the creation of unique architecture that did not resist the brutality of nature. Since 1955, YOSIZAKA had set his sights on ascending the summit of K2 in the Himalayas, however he was unable to achieve this goal and his life ended abruptly in 1980. Inheriting YOSIZAKA's legacy, the Waseda Alpine Club reached the summit of K2 in 1982 with strenuous efforts.

This chapter presents the models and drawings of mountain architecture in harsh natural environments, from the design to the construction. These buildings were designed and built by YOSIZAKA, who loved mountains above all else, and the team members of Atelier U, who were brought together by their connection to mountains. Among them is Kurosawaike Hütte, a dome-shaped structure designed to prevent snow from accumulating on the roof. The distinctive structure has been reproduced for the exhibition at 1/3 of its original scale.

Chapter 5: From Primitive to Civilized Border

YOSIZAKA always carried an accordion style sketchbook with him, sketching with a pen and adding color to the sketches with paint. A tall figure, who stood erect wherever he went, he sketched with a fixed subject, revealing a unique perspective on the landscape, possessing an eye for the daily lives and lifestyles of the people, and keen sensitivity to color and form.

YOSIZAKA referred to his sketchbooks as "Pata-Pata", in reference to their accordion-style folding of a long, narrow sheet of paper that could be completely unfolded. This style of sketching on the Pata-Pata sketchbooks was passed onto him from his father, Shunzo. It is said that the most enjoyable times at Atelier U were when YOSIZAKA returned from his travels; he would spread out his sketches and everyone would gather around and listen to his travel stories while tasting the local liqueur of the places he had been to.

Sixty-four of YOSIZAKA's Pata-Pata sketchbooks were produced in Japan and 76 overseas. Through the display of these panoramic Pata-Pata sketches, this chapter documents his travels around the world, including his expeditionary journeys across the North American and African continents.

Chapter 6: Encouraging Play

You can't help but do what you love, risking your life force to live or die. (1980)

Devoting his life to doing what he loved, YOSIZAKA practiced "serious play", forgetting about sleeping and eating. Referring to himself an "Aruki-tecto" (a play on words coined with the Japanese word aruku, meaning "walk", and tect, from the suffix of the word "architect"), he traveled the globe, creating architecture, strolling through towns, trekking up mountains, teaching his apprentices, and advocating "Iukeiology" ("a study in favor of form", from "iu" meaning "existing", and "kei" meaning "form") towards mutual understanding and peace.

YOSIZAKA also designed small objects that could be worn on or held in the hand, such as rings, bolo ties, and medals. He sketched the designs by hand, and molded models in oil and clay. In his architectural design work, he was also involved in the creation of playful details, from tile patterns, handrails, and door handles to furniture, signage, and graphic symbols. YOSIZAKA's careful observation of objects found in daily life and the stones he encountered on his travels form the basis of "playfulness" in his designs.

YOSIZAKA also discovered the principles of the creation in the universe in such devices as his "Dice Map" (an ingenious representation of the globe in the form of a dice), "the Möbius

Strip", and "single stroke illustrations" and has drawn numerous diagrams on the backs of his notes.

This chapter displays his diagrams and favorite items and traces his travels through his "Pata-Pata" sketches, which he continued to draw along his travels near and far.

Chapter 7: To Iukeiology

In 1966, the YOSIZAKA Laboratory was newly established in the graduate school of Waseda University as a research laboratory for urban planning, primarily conducting fieldwork, research, and planning in urban and rural areas.

Developing his own theories, such as "Iukeiology" and the "investigatory method," and basing his approach on the principle that "cities do not create people, but people create cities," YOSIZAKA developed a number of theories on the urban population explosion, environmental pollution, and regional development caused by unregulated development, which had been progressing along with the "archipelago transformation" and the rise of the megalopolis. Through in-depth analysis of the social conditions of the time, including the collapse of communities, the depopulation of rural areas, and disaster prevention, he consistently delivered proposals to society to step away from modern conveniences to return to the foundation of human living.

This chapter presents a comprehensive overview of the research and projects conducted in various regions from 1965 to 1980, including the Oshima Project, which served as the starting point for the Urban Planning Laboratory; the Japanese Archipelago in the 21st Century and the Tokyo Plan proposed by his Waseda University laboratory team, which transcended academic disciplines; and works that have rarely been presented in exhibitions on his surveys of Tokyo, Sendai, Tsugaru, Korea, and various rural areas.

Based on "Iukeiology", that aims to enable human beings to live in peace, these unique plans varying in scale from micro to macro contain new discoveries that offer nourishment for our thoughts of the future in architecture and design.

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Text edit by Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo*