TEXT AND INVERSION IN THE ARCHITECTURE OF SEIICHI SHIRAI

A Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the nature of the relationship between symbolism and embodied experience in the work of the Japanese architect Seiichi Shirai, with a special emphasis on the institutional and commercial buildings of the post-World War Two period. The first part studies the signification and graphic implementation of text in Shirai's buildings, book designs, and calligraphy and the ways that these work together to condition the engagement of the subject. I will trace the development of Shirai's use of text from its early appearance in book design and his first architectural projects to its apogee in the three-dimensional picturesque of the NOA building. In the second part I identify a strategy of "inversion" that plays with the presence, absence, substitution, and juxtaposition of potentially contradictory effects and examine its development from simple contrarian gestures in early residential works to the sophisticated layerings that structure the picturesque experience in the Santa Chiara building, the NOA building, the Shoto Museum of Art, and the Shizuoka City Serizawa Keisuke Museum.

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1. INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

For critics and historians of modern Japanese architecture, Seiichi Shirai (1905-1983) is an anomalous and problematic figure whose works have been difficult to position within the broader narratives of the subject.[1] Shirai was in some respects an insider in the architectural community that came to dominate the national stage in the post-World War II period, having maintained close relationships with vital figures such as critic Noboru Kawazoe and earned wide recognition for the role he played at the outset of the so-called "the tradition debate" in the 1950s, which consisted of a number of vigorous public exchanges that ended up guiding the agenda of architects over the subsequent decade. At the same time, Shirai was a nonconformist who studied philosophy in Heidelberg in the 1930s and came somewhat by accident to the practice of architecture. Apparently lacking a professional license, he pursued an architecture that clashed with the prevailing postwar mantra of clarity and honesty in structural expression, most obviously through his obsession with masonry cladding and classical motifs. Highly singular in form and rich in material presence and symbolism, Shirai's architecture continues to be viewed in antithetical opposition to the basic precepts of modernism.

Even though Shirai garnered many enthusiastic followers, this enormous gap between his conception of architecture and that of other contemporaneous prac-

[1] I will write Japanese names following the usual convention in English, with the given name before the family name.

tices has resulted in an uneven treatment of his work in the literature, with surprisingly little critical scrutiny of the buildings themselves. This is not however for a lack of resources. Shirai himself designed and published a comprehensive monograph on his architectural oeuvre (*Shirai seiichi no kenchiku*) as well as a book containing a large selection of his essays (*Musō*), although these can only constitute a starting point for research into Shirai's work. The monograph consists of carefully chosen photographs together with texts by four critics and covers up to the Shinwa Bank headquarters, while the essays disclose Shirai's design thinking in generally very abstract or philosophical terms, when discussed at all.[2] Shirai was also active as a book designer and maintained a special relationship with the publisher Chuōkōron in this capacity, and his work as an "amateur" calligrapher was both exhibited and published in book form.[3] The output from these activities also provide important entryways into Shirai's artistic thinking.

Following his death and under the leadership of his son Ikuma, Shirai's architecture firm, Shirai Seiichi Kenkyūjo (Seiichi Shirai Research Office), published in 1988 a multivolume series containing drawings, interviews, transcribed conversations, and a more exhaustive compilation of essays (*Shirai seiichi zenshū*, *Seiiti Sirai Complete Works*), as well as a set of reproductions of his sketches (*Shirai seiichi sukecchi shu: dessin & esquisse by S. Sirai*).[4] Ikuma Shirai has continued to write and

[2]Seiichi Shirai 白井晟一, *Shirai seiichi no kenchiku* 白井晟一の建築 (Tokyo: Chuōkōronsha, 1974); Seiichi Shirai, *Musō* 無窓 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1979).

[3]Seiichi Shirai, *Koshikyo shojō I* 顧之居書帖 (Tokyo: Kaoshima shuppan, 1970); Seiichi Shirai, *Koshikyo shojō II* 顧之居書帖 2 (Tokyo: Kagoshima shuppan, 1976); Seiichi Shirai, *Koshikyo shojō III* 顧之居書帖 3 (Tokyo: Unakku tōkyō, 1978)

[4]Shirai Seiichi Kenkyūjo 白井晟一研究所, *Shirai seiichi zenshū*, *seiiti sirai Complete Works* 白井晟一全集 (Kyoto: Dōhōsha, 1988); Shirai Seiichi Kenkyūjo 白井晟一研究所, *Shirai seiichi sukecchi shu:*

commission essays about his father, which have been published in conjunction with old photographs.[5] Although some of these volumes are not so readily available, especially *Shirai seiichi zenshū* and the sketches, the 2010 reissue of *Musō* and the 2011 publication of another selection of interviews and conversations edited by Shirai's other son Hyōsuke and his grandson Genta have ensured that Shirai's words continue to remain accessible to a public audience.[6]

Other valuable resources are books written by Shirai's acquaintances, including ones by Kawazoe (*Shirai seiichi: kenchiku to sono sekai*, Seiichi Shirai: Architecture and its World) and the architect Tokugen Mizuhara (*Shirai seiichi no hito to kenchiku*, The Person and Architecture of Seiichi Shirai), both of whom openly discuss their personal relationship with Shirai and elucidate his work through private anecdotes and critical reflections.[7] Between 1978 and 1984 Shirai Seiichi Kenkyūjo published a series of five books, edited by Sōroku En'ya, which contain essays not only by architects but also by visual artists, poets, musicians, and critics and encompass a wide variety of issues and subjects that have direct or indirect resonances with Shirai's work.[8] Contributors included architects Arata Isozaki and Tokugen Mizuhara, architecture critic Hajime Yatsuka, art critic Kōji

dessin & esquisse by S. Sirai 白井晟一スケッチ集 (Kyoto: Dōhōsha, 1992).

[5]Shirai Seiichi Kenkyūjo, *Shirai seiichi no kenchiku I–V* 白井晟一の研究 I–V (Tokyo: Merukumāru, 2013–16).

[6]Seiichi Shirai, *Musō* 無窓 (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 2011); Seiichi Shirai, *Shirai seiichi kenchiku o kataru: taidan to zadan* 白井晟一　建築を語る: 対談と座談 (Tokyo: Chuōkōronsha, 2011).

[7]Noboru Kawazoe 川添登, *Shirai seiichi: kenchiku to sono sekai* 白井晟一: 建築とその世界 (Tokyo: Sekai bunkasha, 1978); Tokugen Mizuhara 水原徳言, *Shirai seiichi no kenchiku to hito: jōmon teki narumono* 白井晟一の建築と人: 縄文的なるもの (Tokyo: Sagami shobō, 1979).

[8]Sōroku En'ya 塩屋宋六, ed., *Shirai seiichi kenkyū I–V* 白井晟一研究 I–V (Tokyo: Nanyōdō, 1978–84).

Taki, composer Yūji Takahashi, philosopher Hiroshi Ichikawa, and poet Shuntarō Tanigawa. The motivation seems to have been to provide a forum for theoretical discussion that was not confined to an analysis of architectural projects. For example, Mizuhara was specifically instructed by Ikuma Shirai not to theorize Shirai's architecture but rather the fragmentary style of his texts.[9] Many of the essays in this series have an abstract bent and aim at broader cultural and philosophical issues, and at the points where Shirai directly figures into the discussion there is a tendency to depend heavily on his words rather than on the work itself, so that any insights into the relationship between architectural ideas and their physical realization remain somewhat circumscribed.

Taking a more down-to-earth pragmatic point of view is another book edited by En'ya that documents Shirai's last completed work, the Shizuoka City Serizawa Keisuke Art Museum. This volume provides a rare insider account of the construction process, from the financial and logistical hurdles in the procurement of a suitable type of stone for the exterior walls to the difficulties of working with unusually hard chestnut lumber.[10] From a more detached perspective, Morihiko Yasuhara, motivated by the enormous amounts of energy that he sensed had gone into the drafting of plans and sections, studied the spatial composition of Shirai's buildings through a careful reading of the drawings.[11] This quasi-scientific reliance on an object-based analysis was meant to counteract what Yasuhara per-

[9]Tokugen Mizuhara, *Jōmon teki narumono*, 7.

[10]Sōroku En'ya 塩屋宋六, ed., *Sekisuikan: kenchiku o utau* 石水館：建築を謳う (Tokyo: Kanae shobō, 1981).

[11]Morihiko Yasuhara 安原盛彦, *Shirai seiichi, kūkan dokkai: keishiki e no ihan* 白井晟一空間読解: 形式への違犯 (Kyoto: Gakugei shuppan, 2005).

ceived as a prevalent attitude among critics and historians which mystified Shirai through the use of such labels as "philosophical architecture" and "heterodoxy" that had the effect of shielding the actual work from close scrutiny.[12] At the same time, Yasuhara saw in the drawings a point of access to details that remain hidden from the experience of the users of the buildings but nevertheless provide critical clues into the intentions of the architect. In Yasuhara's view, Shirai's design is motivated by a will to violate established form. As will be evident, this idea is closely related to the concept of inversion that I will aim to unravel as a guiding principle in many of Shirai's designs. In fact the strategy of inversion can be thought of as subsuming the will to violate form as a special case.

Shirai has held great appeal for architects who have been dissatisfied with the course of modernism, such as Isozaki and, more recently, Terunobu Fujimori, both of whom are extensively engaged in public architectural discourse and have written about Shirai in personal terms. Isozaki in fact played a role in sustaining interest in Shirai as a noteworthy architect after the tradition debate had subsided in the 1960s. In essays published in 1968, 1976, and 1980, Isozaki proposed what came to be an influential conceptualization and periodization of Shirai's work, including calligraphy, through such terms as "fractured," "man-

[12] In the 1955 pamphlet *Temple Atomic Catastrophs* written in English, Kawazoe introduces Shirai as "a Japanese architect specialized in European philosophy at Heidelberg University, Germany." Osamu Kurita may be the first to have used the expression "heterodoxy" 異端 to describe Shirai. See Osamu Kurita 栗田勇, "Itan no sakka, shirai seiichi" 異端の作家・白井晟一 [The heterodox author Seiichi Shirai], *Kenchiku* 15 (Dec. 1961):31-37. Interestingly, in the same article and elsewhere Kurita has also invoked the word "orthodoxy" in reference to Shirai's search for fundamental forms and principles anchored in the broader arc of civilization.

nerist," and "baroque."[13] That Isozaki developed a certain esteem for this body of work was reflected in his lobbying of fellow jury members to consider awarding the Pritzker Prize to Shirai, an effort that failed to come to fruition before Shirai's death in 1983.[14]

Since his death there have been many special features on Shirai in journals and magazines specializing in architecture or art.[15] In one of the many critical responses to the retrospective in the February 1985 special issue of the journal *Kenchiku bunka*, Fujimori wrote an essay in which he discusses the idea of amateurism as a modus operandi for Shirai, a theme which he pursued further in a conversation published in 2011.[16] More recently Fujimori and Isozaki took up Shirai as a topic in one of an ongoing series of published conversations between them.[17] Written for the general public and thus eschewing the rigour that would

[13]Arata Isozaki 磯崎新, "Tōketsushita jikanno sanakani, ragyōno kannento mukaiai nagara, isshunno sentakuni zensonzaio kakerukotoni yotte kumitate rareta, 'seiichi gonomi' no seiritsuto, gendaikenchikuno nakade manierisutoteki hassouno imi" 凍結した時間のさなかに，裸形の観念とむかい合いながら，一瞬の選択に全存在をかけることによって組みたてられた，《晟一好み》の成立と，現代建築のなかでのマニエリスト的発想の意味，　*Shinkenchiku* 43, no.2 (Feb. 1968): 164-168; Arata Isozaki, "Hasai shita danpen o tsunagu me"破砕した断片をつなぐ眼 *Space Design*, special issue, *Shirai Seiichi* 137 (January 1976): 77-82. ; Arata Isozaki, "Seisoku to shite no kenchiku" 正息としての建築 in *Kaishōkan* ed. Kunio Tsuji 辻邦生 (Tokyo: Chūōkōron, 1980)

[14] Arata Isozaki 磯崎新 and Terunobu Fujimori 藤森照信, *Isozaki arata to fujimori terunobu no modanizumu kenchiku dangi: : sengo nihon no modanizumu no kaku wa senzen senchu ni atta* 磯崎新と藤森照信のモダニズム建築談義: 戦後日本のモダニズムの核は、戦前・戦中にあった (Tokyo: Rokuyōsha, 2016), 194

[15]For example, *Kenchiku bunka*, special issue *Shirai seiichi: kindai tono sōkoku no kiseki* 白井晟一: 近代との相克の奇跡 40, (Feb. 1985); *Jyūtaku kenchiku* 260 (Nov. 1996); *Jyūtaku kenchiku*, special issue, *Shirai seiichi o sagashite* 白井晟一を探して 417 (January, 2010)

[16]Terunobu Fujimori, "Seiichi kowai" 晟一こわい *Kenchiku bunka* 40, (March, 1985) 14; Terunobu Fujimori, "Shirai seiichi no shirōtosei to jōmonteki narumono: isai o hanatta kokō no kenchikuka ga miidashita nihon no dentō towa?" 白井晟一の素人性と縄文的なるもの: 異彩を放った孤高の建築家が見出した日本の伝統とは? in Terunobu Fujimori, *Kenchiku towa nanika: fujimori terunobu no kotoba* 建築とは何か: 藤森照信の言葉 (Tokyo: Ekusunarejji, 2011), 124-149.

[17]Isozaki and Fujimori, *Modanizumu kenchikudangi*, 159-194. Shirai is also mentioned in Arata

be demanded of an academic treatment, this dialogue nevertheless provides insightful commentary on the connection of Shirai's artistic lineage to Surrealism as well as accounts of some of the personal biography surrounding Shirai's projects. Other notable publications include a summary of the extensive notes of Shirai's oral accounts that Kawazoe took during the preparation of the book *Kenchiku to sono sekai*, notes that were taken at the request of the architect himself, who "wished to leave behind more accurate biography" whether or not it would be made public.[18] Kenjirō Okazaki has also written a substantial but at times speculative analysis of Shirai's work that touches upon his major buildings, calligraphy, and essays and emphasizes the significance of the atomic bomb and of the Christian themes in Shirai's thinking.[19]

In the academic sphere within Japan there has been surprisingly little critical analysis despite an increasing stream of new articles on Shirai over the past ten years. These papers tend to value documentation of material and form and take classificatory approaches to Shirai's work and words, sometimes summarizing their findings in the form of a table.[20] While they may constitute an important step towards the analysis and understanding of Shirai's work, there is always a

Isozaki and Terunobu Fujimori, *Isozaki Arata to Fujimori Terunobu no chaseki kenchiku kōgi* 磯崎新と藤森照信の茶席建築講義 (Tokyo: Rokuyōsha, 2015) 30.

[18]Noboru Kawazoe, "Shirai seiichi ron nōto I" 白井晟一論ノート I, *Kindai kenchiku* 61, no. 3, (March 2007): 26-29; Noboru Kawazoe, "Shirai seiichi ron nōto II" 白井晟一論ノート II, *Kindai kenchiku* 61, no. 4, (April 2007): 26-30.

[19]Kenjirō Okazaki 岡崎乾二郎, "Gijutsu no jōken: shirai seiichi to iu mondaigun zenhen" 芸術の条件: 白井晟一という問題群 (前編), *Bijutsu techō* 63, no. 948 (Feb. 2011): 114-131 ; Kenjirō Okazaki, "Gijutsu no jōken: shirai seiichi to iu mondaigun kōhen" 芸術の条件: 白井晟一という問題群 (後編), *Bijutsu techō* 63, no. 948 (March 2011): 176-196

[20]That architecture is categorized as part of engineering may be behind the production of these kind of scientific studies.

risk of oversimplification in this kind of narrow empirical approach. Somewhat exceptional in this direction are the studies by Kōsuke Hatō, the author of the only doctoral dissertation on Shirai indexed by the National Diet Library. In his dissertation Hatō examined Shirai's attitude towards tradition through his statements as well as the ceiling design of his Japanese-style buildings.[21] Since graduating in 2014, Hatō has been deepening his analysis by incrementally expanding the scope of his study to include tokonoma, calligraphy, and the posthumous Japanese-style project Unbankyo.

A number of exhibitions on Shirai were coordinated and staged in 2010 and 2011, beginning with *Sirai, ima: shirai seiichi no zōkei* (Shirai Now: the Form-making of Seiichi Shirai) at the Yokoyama Kinen Manzū Museum of the Tokyo Zokei University and followed by *Kenchikuka Shirai Seiichi: seishin to kūkan* (which translates as *Seiichi Shirai: Spirit and Space* but was given the English title *Sirai: Anima et Persona*) at the Museum of Modern Art, Gunma, which subsequently toured to the Panasonic Electric Works' Shiodome Museum in Tokyo and to the Kyoto Institute of Technology Museum and Archives. More recently in June 2018, artifacts related to Shirai's Temple of Atomic Catastrophes were exhibited at a private gallery, Gallery 5610, under the auspices of Genbakudō kensetsu iinkai (The Committee for the Construction of the Temple of Atomic Catastrophes), whose mission is the posthumous construction of this seminal but unrealized project from the 1950s. The publications that were produced in conjunction with these

[21] Kōsuke Hatō 羽藤広輔, "Shōwaki kenchikuka ni yoru washitsu no kanōsei ni tsuite: shirai seiichi no jirei o chūshin ni" 昭和期建築家による和室の可能性について --白井晟一の事例を中心に (PhD dissertation, Kyoto University, 2014).

three exhibitions—a catalogue in the case of the first two and a book of essays in the case of the third—have also contributed to the expansion of the bibliography on Shirai in the last decade.[22] The continued attention Shirai has been receiving through exhibitions, book publications, and journal and magazine articles decades after his death is indicative of the cultural significance that his architecture carries in Japan and signals a need for more extensive theoretical and historical analysis.

Curiously Shirai is almost unknown in the West. The literature on his work in English has been scant and in particular has not included any monographic treatment. In a 1978 exhibition catalogue, Kenneth Frampton very briefly mentions Shirai in connection with the concern of the "New Wave" of contemporary Japanese architecture for the "existential and formal reconstitution of everyday reality." Frampton takes Tadao Ando as representative of one approach in which the programmatic requirements are fragmented and nominalized, while positioning Shirai at another complementary end in which the existential is elevated at the cost of the functional, referring to "the almost legendary story of the architect Shirai Seiichi who designed his house without a toilet for the sake of volumetric purity and in order that his family should become more aware of the act of defecation which then had to take place both in and on the garden."[23] It is ironic

[22] *Sirai, ima: shirai seiichi no zōkei* Sirai, いま: 白井晟一の造形, (Tokyo: Tokyo Zōkei University, 2010); Ikuma Shirai and Katsutoshi Taniuchi, ed., *Shirai seiichi: seishin to kūkan* 白井晟一: 精神と空間 (Kyoto: Seigensha, 2010); Kenjirō Okazaki et al., *Shirai seiichi no genbakudō: yottsu no taiwa* 白井晟一の原爆堂: 四つの対話 (Tokyo: Shōbunsha, 2018).

[23] Kenneth Frampton, "The Japanese New Wave," *Wave of Japanese Architecture Catalogue 10* (The Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies, 1978), 3.

that Frampton, a strong proponent of regional inflection in modern architecture who is renowned for his critical and historical insights, did not choose to examine Shirai in any depth despite the architect's rather singular and illuminating path in negotiating the problematic of Japanese identity and its expression.

In a 1981 article aimed at introducing Japanese architecture after modernism to an English-speaking audience, Hajime Yatsuka elaborates on the dichotomous framework opposing Shirai to Tange that Kawazoe had promoted in his staging of the tradition debate in the 1950s, calling these two architects "two '*maîtres*' of postwar development."[24] The 1984 book *Contemporary Architecture of Japan, 1958-84* by Hiroyuki Suzuki, Reyner Banham, and Katsuhiro Kobayashi contains a single page spread on the Shinwa Bank headquarters as part of its compilation of ninety or so buildings illustrating Japanese architecture from the titular period.[25] Botond Bognar, in his 1985 volume *Contemporary Japanese Architecture*, describes Shirai's output as part of a tradition of "bizarre" architecture in Japan and uses such terms as "mystic" and "Mannerist" in his discussions of the NOA building and the Shoto Museum. In his estimation, Shirai is "the most enigmatic figures in Japanese architecture today" whose architecture "has little in common with rational approach to design."[26] In this spirit he anchors Shirai at one end of a spectrum that stretches across to Kazuo Shinohara's rational-geometric approach stripped

[24]Hajime Yatsuka, "Architecture in the Urban Desert: a Critical Introduction to Japanese Architecture after Modernism," *Oppositions* (Winter, 1981): 2-35.

[25]Hiroyuki Suzuki, Reyner Banham, and Katsuhiro Kobayashi, *Contemporary Architecture of Japan, 1958-84* (New York : Rizzoli, 1985).

[26]Boton Bognar, *Contemporary Japanese Architecture: its Development and Challenge* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1985), 214.

of symbolism at the other end, and positions much of the new generation of work in the 1970s and early 1980s, notably including that of Isozaki, as interpolating between these two extremes. David Stewart, in the 1993 essay he contributed to a monograph on Shin Takamatsu, recognizes Shirai as an important influence on Takamatsu's early buildings in terms of form and material, although he omits Shirai altogether in his book *The Making of a Modern Japanese Architecture*.[27] Bognar's contribution to the same monograph on Takamatsu also identifies Shirai as a precursor to Takamatsu, comparing Shirai's NOA and Shinwa Bank buildings with Takamatsu's Origin I and Yoshida House.[28] Shirai is also briefly mentioned in the introduction to Dana Buntrock's 2010 book *Materials and Meaning in Contemporary Japanese Architecture* as one example, beyond Tange, of a general trend in postwar Japanese architecture in which inspiration was sought in ancient cultures.[29]

The outright omission of Shirai in some of the English literature on Japanese architecture is especially remarkable. Charles Jencks does not mention Shirai in his article "The Pluralism of Japanese Architecture," and neither do Hiroyuki Suzuki and Kazuhiro Ishii in their account of post-Metabolism architecture in *Japan Architect*.[30] This dearth of coverage of Shirai is not special to the English-

[27]David Stewart, "Poems and Sword," in *Shin Takamatsu* ed. Paolo Polledri (New York: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Rizzoli, 1993) 73-96; David Stewart, *The Making of a Modern Japanese Architecture: 1868 to the Present* (Tokyo; New York: Kodansha International, 1988).

[28]Botond Bognar, "From Ritualistic Objects to Science Fiction Constructs: the Enigma of Shin Takamatsu's Architecture," in *Shin Takamatsu* ed. Paolo Polledri (New York: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Rizzoli, 1993) 73-96.

[29]Dana Buntrock, *Materials and Meaning in Contemporary Japanese Architecture: Tradition and Today* (London, New York: Routledge, 2010), 4.

[30]Charles Jencks, "The Pluralism of Japanese Architecture" in *Late-Modern Architecture and*

language literature. Nikola Nikolovski has observed for example that Shirai has never been featured in the magazines *Casabella* or *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* (or *Architectural Design* for that matter).[31]

The only academic study in English that examines Shirai in a substantial way is the doctoral dissertation of Torben Berns.[32] Tackling the idea of creativity and the question of originality in relation to history, in particular through the function of the symbolic in architecture, Berns compares the approaches of Shirai and Tange as follows:

> Both architects are appealing to the legibility of symbol. Both architects know that the architect is able to construct a symbol, which means that the tradition to which it alludes is given through the spirit of the time, rather than a tradition which is written in stone. Tradition for both men is inarticulate and therefore ready to be formed according to a particular vision: a vision coalesced out of the inarticulate common sense just as all meanings are called forth and allowed to function in everyday currency. The difference, however, is that for Tange it serves as a legitimation for the action of the demiurge—a vestige of his pre-war romanticism which would place him in the position of 'architect to the nation'. For Shirai, it is the self-consciousness of the architect's dependence on dialogue which frames and limits the ability of the symbol to function.[33]

The present study shares Berns's interest in the symbolic indeterminacy of Shirai's architecture, but while Berns tries to clarify the political significance of

Other Essays (London: Academy Editions,1980), 98-129; Hiroyuki Suzuki and Kazuhiro Ishii, "The New Wave in Japanese Architecture,"*Japan Architect* 247 (Oct.-Nov, 1977): 8-11.

[31]Nikola Nikolovski, "Representation and Contextualization of Japanese Architecture in Western Architectural Periodicals" (PhD dissertation, University of Tokyo, 2015), 179.

[32]Torben Daniel Berns, "The Paradox of Modern (Japanese) Architecture" (PhD diss., McGill University, 2002).

[33]Ibid., 115.

the self-conscious manipulation of the symbolic through a philosophical analysis of Shirai's words, my interest lies instead in the implication of this indeterminacy for the architecture itself as a distinct mode of communication that integrates embodied experience. My analysis thus relies first and foremost on a close examination of the physical reality of the work, taking up as it were the invitation that Shirai himself issued in a conversation with the poet Shuntarō Tanigawa:

> I always say if there is something you want to ask, please ask the architecture I have made. [...] I believe in the possibility of a certain communication and dialogue between maker and beholder depending on the responses felt through each individual's subjective experience mediated by space.[34]

In giving priority to the tangible physical object over the architect's intellectual struggles or the historical and cultural context, my method aligns with Yasuhara's objective approach but with a belief that the articulation of Shirai's will to architecture ultimately registers in the possibility of a shared and even universal experience, one that transcends any mediation through photography, discourse, or other representational apparatus. This insistence on architectural immediacy implicitly disputes the relevance of the issue of cultural exclusivity to an appreciation and understanding of Shirai's work, and sees the frequent reading of the architecture in terms of enigmatic qualities not as the basis for its mystical elevation under such rubrics as "philosophical" and "heterodoxy" or for asserting its inaccessibility due to cultural differences but rather as a call for a more penetrat-

[34]Shuntarō Tanigawa 谷川俊太郎, "Shi to kenchiku"詩と建築, in *Shirai seiichi kenkyū IV* (Tokyo: Nanyōdo, 1981), 54. Unless otherwise noted, all translations from Japanese to English are mine.

ing theoretical analysis of the kind that I aim to contribute to here.[35]

Many have pointed out the impossibility and even irrelevance of deciphering the symbolic content of Shirai's work. While Berns speaks abstractly about the limits on the unilateral power of the symbolic, Okazaki has stated that "those who understand understand (and those who don't don't)" and sees the excavation of meaning and provenance as a futile and ultimately useless exercise. What I argue is that this impenetrable and ever-shifting play of signifiers is subordinate to an architectural logic into which it has been programmed, one that prioritizes relation over object and experience over representation and firmly situates Shirai within a modern paradigm that prizes the agency of the subject. The logic to which I am referring here is not simply the kind of abstract bricolage through which Isozaki and others have attempted to theorize the "Japaneseness" of Shirai's work but rather a more concrete and discipline-specific organizing principle that conditions the aggregation and combination of potentially disparate elements, what Rosalind Krauss has described as the "logical support" of the artwork, a set of rules that substitute for the traditional idea of medium defined in terms of physical and material parameters.[36]

The political implications of this kind of critical analysis were made clear by Colin Rowe in the 1973 addendum to his celebrated essay *The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa*. Rowe asserts that a formal Wölflinian approach to the study of art-

[35]Toshiaki Nagaya, for example, asserts in his Master's thesis that "to understand Shirai [...] requires an appreciation of an oriental sensibility which is a result of cumulative training and experiences, rather than theoretical interpretations." Toshiaki Nagaya, "Seiichi Shirai and Subjective Method of Synthesis" (MSc thesis, MIT, 1988), 5.

[36]Rosalind Krauss, *Under Blue Cup* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011), 16-17.

work, while limited in its ability to address questions of an iconographic or cultural nature and tending to impose "enormous strain upon both its consumer and producer," might "still possess the merit of appealing primarily to what is visible and of, thereby, making the minimum of pretences to erudition and the least possible number of references outside itself," that it "possess the merits of *accessibility*" [italics mine].[37] My aim is to demonstrate in the case of Shirai's work that this methodology with its corollary of accessibility is not simply an a priori choice designed to unlock one aspect of the work but rather an a posteriori conclusion that sees the role of cultural meaning and the symbolic as ultimately subordinate in the programming and theatrics of experience. This study is therefore not intended as a basis for the type of comparative analysis undertaken for instance by Rowe in his essay on Palladio and Le Corbusier, but rather as an attestation of the uniqueness of Shirai's work, and in particular will not be concerned with making the kinds of comparisons with other architects (notably Tange) that consume many studies on Shirai.[38] Moreover, if we are to speak of *form* in this context, it will be in an expanded sense that integrates experience with physical reality and at the same time aligns with Krauss's shift from the technical to the conceptual in understanding the nature of medium in the production of art, here inflected in ways unique to the discipline of architecture. In these ways Shirai's practice can be thought of as heralding a global architecture that participates in a collective discourse by prioritizing experience over the anxieties and inhibitions of cultural

[37]Colin Rowe, "The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa: Palladio and Le Corbusier Compared," *Architectural Review* 101 (March 1947): 101-104.

[38]This is the route that Berns takes in his dissertation, for example.

difference between consumer and producer.

The scope of the investigation will be mostly limited to large institutional buildings with special emphasis on the later works beginning in the 1960s, and excludes the more obviously Japanese-inflected designs and the residential projects, which are less extroverted and original in their expression. Although the works in these different categories undoubtedly share commonalities, in the end they belong to fundamentally different paradigms. My study thus has minimal overlap, for example, with Hatō's investigations focusing on the Japanese-style projects.

What I will identify in the later institutional work is a set of physical and conceptual binaries—up and down, close and far, dark and light, exterior and interior, male and female—that serve to orchestrate the built reality of material and form, much in line with Krauss's expanded conception of medium as a Kantian logic that conditions through the various "paradigms" spanned by such pairs, such as depth in the case of close and far.[39] I argue that Shirai, by playing with the presence, absence, substitution, and juxtaposition of potentially contradictory effects, deliberately sought to confuse and disrupt any extraction of stable meaning from these dichotomies, thereby thrusting the problem of interpretation back onto the subject and its embodied experience. Indeed it is in this precipitation of an interlocution between object and subject through the interruption of binary logic that the power of Shirai's architecture resides. The examination and analysis of this dialectical maneuver, which I will refer to as inversion, is the subject of

[39]Krauss takes the term "paradigm" from Roland Barthes. Krauss, *Under Blue Cup*, 17.

this dissertation.

The first chapter studies the relation between the signification and graphic implementation of text in Shirai's buildings, book designs, and calligraphic works on the one hand and the bodily activity of the beholder on the other hand. I will trace the development of Shirai's use of text from its early appearance in book design and his debut architectural projects to its apogee in the three-dimensional picturesque of the NOA building. Far from simplifying the analysis through a specialized focus, this concentration on text will give us a general window into the various ways in which Shirai manipulates the symbolic. At the same time, text is endowed with a special capacity to engage the subject at an intellectual level that is separate from its physical or iconic presence. We will see that the tension between the intellectual and the physical is self-consciously and self-reflexively manipulated in the shaping, combination, and physical execution of lettering so as to downplay the literal meaning and spark the intellectual curiosity and visceral engagement of the user through symbolic or iconic suggestiveness.

In the second chapter, I will examine the development of the strategy of inversion from the simple contrarian gesture to the sophisticated layerings that structure the picturesque experience in later buildings. Three types of inversions—substitution, juxtaposition, and negation—are identified and analyzed. While various sources of inspiration and contextual conditions that fed this development are noted—from Shirai's early interest in the expression of eroticism and his cultural differentiation between Japan and the West on the basis of ideas of rationality and irrationality, to Tarō Okamoto's concept of Polarism and the fascina-

tion with the body among artists working in different media in the 1960s—these remain ancillary to the present study. In particular, I have not attempted the kind of investigation into the connections with psychoanalysis that Bognar has advocated even if Shirai's repeated use of Jungian terminology such as "anima" and "persona" clearly demands it.[40] Special attention is given to the Shinwa Bank headquarters as a transitional project through which the strategy of inversion became an active and increasingly sophisticated force. The chapter culminates with an examination of the Santa Chiara building, NOA building, Shoto Museum, and Shizuoka City Serizawa Keisuke Museum as mature examples in which the layering of inversive maneuvers acquires new modes of complexity, even operating at a higher categorical level in the intercourse between different projects.

What this dissertation does not include is an attempt to address the broader social, political, and economic conditions surrounding the production of Shirai's architecture or to document its actual practice. In choosing Shirai as the subject of study, however, I am implicitly pointing to a gap that I believe exists in the common narrative of modern Japanese architecture. While the irreducibility of Shirai's architecture might appear to have circumscribed its influence on other architects, the kinds of formal resonances that Bognar and Stewart have indicated in the work of Takamatsu suggest otherwise and attest to the need for a wider genealogical study that situates Shirai in a more critical and integral way within the history of modern architecture in Japan and abroad.

[40] Bognar, *Contemporary Japanese Architecture*, 216.

2. PERCEPTION, MOVEMENT, AND SIGNIFICATION

In its aspirations to mount a decisive and even utopian break from the past, the project of architectural modernism has not only had to radically rethink the relation between tradition and invention but also had to grapple with the way this problematic bears on the tension between a universalizing potential and the question of regional and cultural specificity. In Japan, where modernization came to be equated with Westernization in the wake of the Meiji restoration, these issues were complicated by a number of factors, from the Western avant-garde's "discovery" of a proto-modernist ethos in certain Japanese building types and aesthetic sensibilities and the profound and lasting effect this had in shaping the discourse and historical understanding of architecture among Japanese critics and practitioners, to the instrumentalization of Shintoism and its architectural expressions in shrines as a tool for nationalist propaganda leading up to and during World War II.[1]

In the post-World War II period, Japanese artists and thinkers felt compelled to confront the issue of tradition with renewed urgency in a suddenly transformed political and economic order, embarking on a critical debate in which the emphasis was shifted away from the practice of overt formal referencing, now tinged

[1]Perhaps the most influential voice was that of Bruno Taut, who in writing about Japanese architecture in the 1930s extolled the Katsura Rikyu palace for being "honest architecture" while condemning the Tōshōgū shrine at Nikkō as being vulgar and kitsch. See Bruno Taut, *Fundamentals of Japanese Architecture* (Tokyo: Kokusai bunka shinkokai, 1937). For a discussion of the propagandistic use of the Ise shrine during the interwar period, see Jonathan Reynolds, "Ise Shrine and a Modernist Construction of Japanese Tradition," *The Art Bulletin* 83, no. 2 (Jun., 2001): 316-341.

with the danger of evoking the era of imperialist expansion, towards a more abstract way of thinking. One figure who seized on this challenge in a highly singular way was the architect Seiichi Shirai, who played a pivotal role in the so-called "tradition debate" in the 1950s that pitted the ancient Jōmon and Yayoi cultures against each other as aesthetic categories. Especially remarkable and unparalleled is Shirai's obsessive and unorthodox interest in text, whose aesthetic and semantic possibilities he explored as an integral part of his broader architectural program.

Educated in the design department of Kyoto Kōtō Kōgei Gakkō, the predecessor of the present Kyoto Institute of Technology, Shirai was first exposed to the graphical arts before turning to architecture, and the encounter between text and design would come to define a key common element across his diverse artistic endeavors. Shirai's buildings are typically adorned with nameplates, insignias, and Latin inscriptions, and in cases where signage is absent the association with text is nevertheless sustained through the invention of obscure nicknames that would often assign a non-standard pronunciation to an unusual combination of *kanji* (Chinese characters).[2] Even the lettering of the labels in his technical drawings are frequently and uncharacteristically articulated with serifs, as if to mimic printed text.[3] Outside of these architectural activities, Shirai showcased his skills

[2]The first house he built for himself Shirai named 滴々居 ("drip-drip-residence," probably pronounced teki-teki-kyo) in reflection of the fact that the structure leaked, and the second Kohakuan (虚白庵), meaning empty white cabin or hermitage.

[3]Even if Shirai himself was not responsible for this labeling, the apprentices who would have carried out this work were typically required to undergo an extensive year-long training in lettering and the use of Japanese calligraphy as a source for typography.

in text and graphics through book design, as well as through Japanese calligraphy, which he took up intensively in the 1960s as another outlet for his artistic energies.

Despite the considerable variety in form, material, and function, there is a certain coherency in the way Shirai treated text and integrated it into his works, all of which can be viewed as architectural projects that, whether they be book design, lettering, calligraphy, or actual building, combine elementary parts into an aesthetic whole grounded in the uprightness of the body. In the context of this wide-ranging program, Shirai demonstrated a deep commitment to medium and tradition through the ways in which he densely impregnated text with signification at the various levels of denotation, sensory reception, and iconography. At the same time, his obsession with the idea of the spiritual and its capacity to ignite formal invention and experimentation invariably resulted in a resistance to and even harsh rejection of customary techniques and methodologies that had the perverse effect of subverting the ostensible functions of text, calligraphy, and typography without introducing any distortion in legibility. This kind of dialectical tension that resists an easy synthesis of tradition and form was part of a general architectural program to give novel expressions of the irrational through an ironically methodical strategy of what I elsewhere called inversion. In what follows I will carry out a detailed analysis of the use of Latin inscriptions and other text in his architecture and his book designs as well as the methodology of his calligraphy to illustrate one way in which Shirai used architectural and symbolic maneuvers in his ambition to forge a critical path that radically rethinks the

relationship between traditionalism and the avant-garde.

Text and Intelligibility

In Shirai's architecture text is constantly invested with a potential to engage the beholder beyond its simple linguistic function, often in ways that are activated by a subversion of lexical intelligibility itself. This is especially true in Shirai's frequent use of Latin dicta, which can be read as coded expressions of his sentiments towards a project or other personal thoughts and ambitions. These dicta were inscribed on fireplaces, facades, and insignia, as well as in other places less obviously informed by convention, and were almost always rendered in a subtly serifed classical typeface that exuded an air of formality and erudition. The engraving "Vitam impendere vero" (to devote one's life to truth) embellished the fireplace mantle of his first project, a house for his brother-in-law Kōichirō Kondō (1936, later renamed the Kawamura residence, now demolished), the design of which was originally charged to another architect but was eventually taken over by Shirai, who had been initially involved only as an interested onlooker (fig. 1).[4] The phrase originates in a work of the Roman poet Juvenal, but given Shirai's prolonged infatuation with Nietzsche it may have been taken from the latter's book *Untimely Meditations*, which appeared in Japanese translation a year before the completion of the house and mentions Schopenhauer's adoption of the precept as a motto.[5] Other possible sources are Rousseau (who had also embraced

[4]Kawamura is the name of the person who later took over the house.

[5]Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *Han jidaiteki kosatsu* [Untimely Meditations], trans. Masatsugu Inoue (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1935). Shirai's son Ikuma reports that Shirai kept in his home

the motto) and Schopenhauer himself, both of whom had exerted considerable influence on Japanese thought since the Meiji era.[6] In his next project Kankisō (1938)—the first building wholly designed by Shirai—the same quote, this time scrawled in diminutive hand-drawn cursive but heroically punctuated with an exclamation mark, hovers faintly above the bold Roman capital letters that spell out the architect's name and the building's year of completion above the arched entry way into the living room (fig. 2). The idea of truth resurfaces in textual quotation at the end of his life in the Shizuoka City Serizawa Keisuke Art Museum (1981), where Cicero's dictum "Quod verum simplex sincerumque est id naturae homi[ni]s est aptissimum" (what is true, simple, and genuine appeals most strongly to a man's nature) is engraved onto the entablature of a hollow tholos-like structure which has been embedded into the wall as a teasing visual connection between three adjacent rooms that are otherwise not directly accessible from one another (fig. 3).[7]

In some projects a Latin inscription might speak directly and publicly to the

the Musarion edition of Nietzsche's works, which he purchased later in his life as a replacement for the volumes that were lost during World War II. See Shirai Seiichi Kenkyūjo (白井晟一研究所) Weblog, "Tamaniwa 'Chichi' to shite 3" たまには「父」として 3, Jan. 24, 2011, accessed June 26, 2018, `http://shiraiseiichi.jugem.jp/?eid=60`. Shirai was also said to have practiced imitating Nietzsche's handwriting when he was a young man. See Noboru Kawazoe, *Shirai seiichi: kenchiku to sono sekai* 白井晟一：建築とその世界 (Tokyo: Sekai bunkasha, 1978), 332, 337.

[6]Nietzsche also discusses the motto in relation to Schopenhauer and Rousseau in the aphorism 459 "The Magnanimity of the Thinker," in *The Dawn of Day*, though this book was not translated into Japanese until 1980. It is conceivable however that Shirai knew of this text through a German edition.

[7]The two letters inside the square brackets are omitted in the engraving, as noted by Michiaki Takahashi. See Michiaki Takahashi, *Orupeusu, myūtosu no tanjō: Nōkōka dai 4 kan 453 - 527 gyō chūshaku* オルペウス, ミュートスの誕生: 「農耕歌」第 4 巻 453-527 行注釈 (Tokyo : Chidō shuppan, 2011), 102.

program, as in the bookstore Kankodō (1954), whose facade was adorned with large bronze letters spelling out the phrase "Quod petis hic est MCMLIV librarius Kankodo" (what you seek is here 1974 Bookstore Kankodō) adapted from Horace, which boldly announced the ambition of the poet and owner Motokichi Takahashi to offer a far-ranging selection of literary works to the provincial community of Maebashi (fig. 6).[8] At the Shinwa Bank in Sasebo, the oversized entranceway of the computer tower is inscribed, in gold lettering, with the Ovidian quote "Aurea ne creda quaecunque nitescere cernis · Ovidius "(do not suppose every thing bright to be gold, Ovid), here slightly corrupted through the omission of the *s* after *creda*.[9] In ironic dialogue with this aphorism is the inscription "Per interesse nobili" on the back side of a small truncated square pyramid which has been strategically positioned at the end of the entrance portal, beyond a row of rope stanchions, so that the text can only be seen either through its reflection in the glass wall enclosing the interior or, if one is standing in the foyer inside, directly through the glass wall while peering outward.[10] Unlikely to be noticed by most visitors, who would instead be greeted by the pyramid's elegant frontal

[8]The original Kankodō has now been demolished, but the lettering was saved and transplanted into the facade of a new building. *Nippon no hyakunen kigyō* 日本の百年企業 (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbun Shuppan, 2011), 100. Shirai incorporated the same quote "Quod petis hic est" into his design for the frontispiece of the paperback series Chūōkōron Shinsho.

[9]Shirai says that he wanted "to impress upon this building my wish that the building, catalyzed by something more than the shine of gold, become a place of noble people and heartfelt communication, as well as the poignant recollection that the building was built through the sweat and blood of more than one hundred thousand people of various trades." See "Rekishi eno omāju: Shirai Seiichi shi ni kiku," *Geijutsu Shinchō* 26 (Sept. 1975): 96, quoted in Ichirō Hariu, "Kenchiku ni okeru gaibu to naibu" 建築における外部と内部, *SD : Space design* 137 (January 1976): 85.

[10]Although many of Shirai's Latin inscriptions are implemented with a slight linguistic corruption through the omission of certain letters, in this case there is an issue of grammatical interpretability which results in the meaning itself being somewhat ambiguous.

display of the year of completion of the building in Roman capitals (Anno MDCCCCLXXV), the hidden message seems to be directed towards the insiders of this regional financial institution as a private admonishment that supplements the public Ovidian maxim.

In other instances the contextual relevance of the inscription is less clear. In the headquarters of the Shinwa Bank, the phrase "Amor omnia vincit" (love conquers all) is engraved on the side of a marble-clad mezzanine-bridge that crosses the two-story void of the elevator hallway behind the entrance, uncomfortably incongruous with the building's institutional premise. The fireplace at Kankisō, while otherwise almost identical to the one at the Kawamura residence, is etched with the letters "Anglus ridet," an orthographically idiosyncratic rendering of a locution that abbreviates Horace's line "Ille terrarum mihi praeter omnes angulus ridet" (that corner of the earth smiles on me above all), which in a newly constructed dwelling would have been at odds with the kind of nostalgic sentiment that the phrase is usually meant to invoke.[11]

There is likewise a certain arbitrariness in the choice of the fragment "Puro de fonte" (pure spring), extracted from a work by the Roman poet Propertius, for use as an ornamental text etched into the spouts that fed the exterior water fountains at Kankodō and the Shoto Museum of Art (1980) (fig. 4 and 5). The exterior or semi-exterior water fountain was a periodically recurring motif in Shirai's designs, having also appeared in a plan and perspective drawing for the

[11]The translation of the quote is from Stephen Harrison, *Victorian Horace: Classics and Class* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 126.

unrealized Akita Ringyō Kaikan (Akita timber industry club) project from 1951 and in the plans for the public vestibule in the Ōhato branch of the Shinwa Bank from 1963.[12] While the wall fountain settings at Kankodō and the Shoto Museum differ in overall shape (capsular versus spherical) and stone colour (grey versus red), the custom bronze spouts, with their erotic horn-like protrusions, appear to have been cast from the same mold, each brought to life by the sensual tactility of the putty-like malleability that its form and surface treatment suggest and of the hand-engraved quality of the somewhat coarsely executed lettering on its shaft. The idiosyncratic heterogeneity of the programmatic settings in which these fountains appear, from bookstore and bank to private club and museum, works against any common narrative that the ideas of water, purity, exterior placement, and genital form might suggest through literary, psychological, or cultural connotation, and one should be cautious about trying to assign a fixed extra-subjective meaning to these interventions or to accord them too much individual weight outside their role within a broader architectural theatre, whatever their possible source in Shirai's personal fantasy.

In a conversation with the poet Shuntarō Tanigawa in 1982, Shirai explained his use of Latin inscriptions as a token of his delight in buildings decorated with text. During a European sojourn from 1928 to 1933, partly spent in Heidelberg attending classes of the philosopher Karl Jaspers and the art historian August Grisebach and involving commutes to Paris via Cologne, Shirai developed a par-

[12]This was noted by the blogger Passerby in "Mizunomiba: Shirai Seiichi no kenchiku" 水飲み場：白井晟一の建築, Jan. 28, 2011, accessed June 28, 2018, `http://tokyopasserby.blogspot.com/2011/01/blog-post_28.html`.

ticular fascination with Gothic cathedrals and Neoclassical buildings.[13] Tanigawa asks,

> [...] you often engrave what looks like a Latin inscription on the architecture you create. Recently when I visited the Shoto Museum, there were some Latin words, incomprehensible to me, carved onto the spout of the exterior water fountain. Is it you, Mr. Shirai, who has these sorts of things done? What is it that you feel when you engrave a Latin inscription on a building?

to which Shirai replies,

> I remember having had the Latin dictum 'what you seek is here' inscribed onto the cornice of the facade of a bookstore. It would be a little strange to display such a thing in a Japanese way, and it certainly cannot function as an architectural ornament. For a long time, I enjoyed looking at stone structures in Europe with Latin inscriptions. That's all.[14]

The image of authorial weight and integrity projected by Shirai's inscriptions and dignified by their classical precedents and provenance is summarily undercut here by a nonchalant explanation of their origin as mere souvenirs of European

[13]Shirai recalls his early infatuation with text in conversations with Hiroshi Hara and Ko Miyauchi in Hiroshi Hara and Kō Miyauchi, "Sōzō no ronri: Seishin no kōhai no nakade" 創造の論理「精神の荒廃のなかで」in *Shirai Seiichi kenchiku o kataru : Taidan to zadan* 白井晟一、建築を語る：対談と座談 (Tokyo: Chūōkōron Shinsha, 2011), 129 and with Kunio Maekawa and Hiroshi Ōe in Kunio Maekawa and Hiroshi Ōe, "Hanani hisu," 花に秘す in *Kenchiku o kataru*, 173.

[14]Shuntarō Tanigawa, "Shi to kenchiku" 詩と建築 in *Shirai Seiichi kenkyū IV* 白井晟一研究 IV (Tokyo: Nanyodo, 1981), 54. What Shirai means by the cornice is the panel below the upper rectangular volume between the first and second floors. In this quote, the word Shirai uses for "architectural ornament" is "akusesari," which is the transliteration of the word "accessory" but has different nuances. When referring to a fashion accessory, as seems to be the case here, an akusesari is primarily appreciated for its aesthetic quality and is regarded as an object that is necessary for the purposes of propriety depending on the social occasion. It tends to exclude things that have a practical function such as hats and handbags.

travel. Uninterpretable in any literal way as an expression of the architect's own philosophical stance or cultivated literary interests, and only infrequently and naively resonating with programmatic concerns, these architectural inventions function as a private code whose meaning is no longer accessible nor relevant to the wider public. On the other hand, it is precisely this gap between authority and triviality which enables Shirai to exploit the material and formal conception and physical implementation of the inscriptions as part of a program to manipulate the participants in his architectural drama through a process of disengagement and reengagement with various other spatial, material, and compositional effects.

Kankodō

In the case of Kankodō, the bookstore to which Shirai refers above, the tension between the function of the inscription as text and its role as architectural device has been heightened through its careful conception and crafting as a decorative element, counter to Shirai's assertion about the fundamental non-ornamentality of such use of lettering. Forming a continuous band that runs horizontally across the width of the building in the shadow of the protruding upper level floor slab, the text acts as a foil to the compositionally dominant features of the facade, most conspicuously the centrally positioned canvas-like frontal wall that obscures the two entrances on either side behind it and announces the bookstore's name in three small but dignified Chinese characters cast in bronze. A 1954 photograph shows the bookstore's name to be the visual focal point, each of its sparsely ar-

ranged calligraphic letters projecting out starkly and sculpturally from the much lighter "cement lithin" surface, with the Latin letters being seen in contrast to blend into their material support, matching it in tone (fig. 6).[15] The bookstore shares the same name as an affiliated publishing house which was founded in the early Meiji period and includes as its earliest volume indexed by the National Diet Library the 1880 printing of the *Commentaries on the Four Books* by Zhu Xi. The provenance of the word "Kanko" is the Confucian *Analects*, one of the four books that form the subject of Zhu Xi's historic commentaries, from which it is extracted as part of a passage that is translated in the bookstore's publicity as "there exists enlightened culture" and whose origins would only have been recognized by the highly educated. (The suffix "dō," on the other hand, is a common one for bookstores and essentially means building.)[16] Despite this recondite lineage, the Chinese characters would have nevertheless evoked a certain sense of familiarity in a Japanese audience through their individual meanings and pronunciations, which, in conjunction with the exotic quality of the Latin, would have reinforced the hierarchy established by the spatial and material features of the two styles of lettering and thus further dichotomized their roles as architectural ingredients.

[15]"Kankodō, a Store for Culture," *Shinkenchiku* 29, no.10 (1954):12. "Cement lithin," popular in Japan, is a spray coating that blends cement and inorganic material to give an effect similar to stucco.

[16]The relevant passage is located at the end of book VIII, chapter 19: 巍巍乎、其有成功也、煥乎、其有文章。This phrase is translated in a wide variety of ways, even with some differences in meaning. The bookstore's version 光明なる文化がある is posted on their website "Maebashi o kigen to suru Kankodō" 前橋を起源とする「煥乎堂」, accessed June 30, 2018, `http://www.kankodo-web.co.jp/`. It is interesting to note that the last two characters of the passage, 文章, together meaning writing or literature and read bunshō in Japanese, can also be construed to mean culture, which, as we shall see, resonates with Shirai's understanding of kanji as an embodiment of civilizational development.

At the same time, the Latin inscription was perceived as more than an ornament by many architecture critics, who often ventured a deeper interpretation of Shirai's use of such text, and it even outlasted the original bookstore itself, having been incorporated as a memento into the facade of the replacement building. In choreographing an intricate play of form, material, and cultural legibility, Shirai invited an equivocal reading of the inscription as a cipher that oscillates between decoration and icon, triggering the quintessentially modern question on the role of ornament in architecture.

Latin and Shirai's Formative Years

It was hardly accidental that Shirai turned to Latin, the historic language of the Church and of Western scholarship, as a source of architectural and symbolic material. Growing up in a Methodist family and having attended a mission school, Shirai strongly resisted religious teachings as a child and endeavored to distance himself from Christianity. As a young adult living in Europe, however, he sought to reevaluate his relationship with the Christian faith and began a feverish attempt to reengage with it on his own terms, to "make Catholicism something of my own," concentrating his energies at a certain point on a study of Thomas Aquinas.[17] Even before this, while a college student in the mid-1920s, Shirai's interaction with the faculty at the Department of Philosophy at Kyoto Imperial University (later to be renamed Kyoto University) would have impressed upon him an appreciation of the historical authority of ancient civilizations. During

[17]Shirai et al., "Sōzōno ronri," 131.

this period he was enrolled as a design student at the engineering school Kyoto Kōtō Kōgei Gakkō but was more enthusiastic about learning philosophy and frequented the university where he attend lectures of Hajime Tanabe.[18]

Tanabe, like many members of the university's philosophy department, had studied with Raphael von Koeber, a Russian of German descent who, as a foreign government advisor employed at Tokyo Imperial University from 1893 until 1914, had an enormous influence on the dissemination of Western intellectual and cultural heritage in Japan. While the terms of his contract with the university did not require him to teach Latin and classical Greek, von Koeber nevertheless did so in the belief that the ability to read in these languages was essential to learning Western philosophy. Kitarō Nishida, an older student of von Koeber's who became the central figure of the Kyoto school of philosophy and was remembered by Shirai as having attained a god-like status in the department, recalls having asked von Koeber to recommend him a modern translation of St. Augustine, only to have been met with the response that he should read the original and that one "must read Latin at least."[19] This ethos was passed on to Nishida's student Kiyoshi Miki, who, like his mentor, professed to have read St. Augustine

[18]According to a chronological table in *Kenchiku bunka*, Shirai said that he attended Tanabe's popular lectures on Dōgen's Shōbōgenzō but did not find them interesting nor understand them at all. See "Chronological Record: Bibliography," Special issue on 'Shirai Seiichi' *Kenchiku bunka* 40, no.460 (Feb. 1985): 142. In Fujimori's account, it was Nishida's lectures that Shirai attended. See Arata Isozaki and Terunobu Fujimori, *Isozaki Arata to Fujimori Terunobu no modanizumu kenchiku dangi: sengo nihon no modanizumu no kaku wa senzen senchu ni atta* 磯崎新と藤森照信のモダニズム建築談義 (Tokyo : Rikuyōsha, 2016), 181.

[19]Kitarō Nishida, "Meiji 24, 5 nen koro no Tokyo bunka daigaku senka" 明治二十四、五年頃の東京文科大学選科, in *Nishida Kitarō Zuihitsushū* 西田幾多郎随筆集, ed. Shizuteru Ueda (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1996), 31. Originally published in *Tosho* 707, (February, 2008).

in Latin.[20] Another student of Nishida, the philosopher Jun Tosaka (1900-1945), was teaching English at the engineering school during the time that Shirai was enrolled there, and he and Shirai forged a close relationship that transcended the confines of their academic environment. It was Tosaka who introduced Shirai to another former student of von Koeber's, the philosopher Yasukazu Fukada at Kyoto Imperial University, who suggested to Shirai that he study philosophy in Heidelberg before embarking on a path to becoming an architect.[21]

A pioneer in the field of aesthetics in Japan who introduced French writers such as Anatole France and Ferdinand Brunetière and attempted one of the first Japanese translations of Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, Fukuda embraced von Koeber's affinity for antiquity and frequently centred his lectures around the ideas of Plato and Aristotle.[22] He had a certain facility with foreign languages, which he attributed to von Koeber's teaching (although later stays in Germany and France between 1907 and 1910 would have helped to consolidate his fluency), and the nearly nine hundred foreign books he collected over his lifetime included volumes in French, English, and German as well as a small number in classical Greek

[20]Kiyoshi Miki, "Dokusho henreki" (読書遍歴) in *Bungei* (June 1941- Jan. 1942) reprinted in *Miki Kiyoshi zenshū*, vol.1 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1966) 370. Miki was also associated with the publishing company Tetto Shoin, an offshoot of Iwanami that published a series of Latin grammar books from 1931 to 1932.

[21]Noboru Kawazoe, "Shirai Seiichi ron nōto 1" 白井晟一論ノート, *Kindai kenchiku* 61, no. 3 (March, 2007): 27-28. See also Teijirō Muramatsu, "Seiyō no kabe o tsukiyaburō to shita kenchikuka no tetsugaku to sakuhin" 「西洋の壁」を突き破ろうとした建築家の哲学と作品 in *Shirai Seiichi zenshū: bekkan Shirai Seiichi no me II* (Kyoto: Dōhōsha, 1988), 90.

[22]Yoshioka Kenjiro, "The Thought and Times of Fukada Yasukazu" in *A History of Modern Japanese aesthetics* trans. ed. Michael F. Marra (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 2001), 253-254, and Takahiro Taji, "Morita Keiichi's Encounter with Eupalinos," *J. Archit. Plann., AIJ* 77, no. 680 (Oct. 2012): 2474.

and Latin such as Plato's *Phaedo* and Ovid's *Amorum libri tres*.[23]

While Fukada had a decisive influence on Shirai's life course, perhaps the most consequential figure with respect to Shirai's use of Latin text was Hidenaka Tanaka, a pupil of von Koeber's who specialized in classical studies. Around the time Shirai was launching his career as an architect, Tanaka was pursuing a program to make Latin more accessible to the general public, first with the authoritative Latin grammar book *Nova grammatica latina*, which appeared in 1929 shortly after Shirai had left for Germany, followed by the 1937 publication of *The Iwanami Dictionary of Greek and Latin Quotations*, co-edited with Tarō Ochiai, which has endured as a classic and is still available today.[24] It has been suggested by the scholar of European literature Mitsuaki Takahashi, who became aware of the existence of the quotation dictionary through the writings of Tokugen Mizuhara, that Shirai made extensive use of this volume in choosing the Latin dicta that adorn his buildings.[25] Indeed as Takahashi has noted, most if not all of the Latin inscriptions in Shirai's architecture can be found in the book, usually in identical form but occasionally with very minor differences. An inspection of the Greek portion of the dictionary reveals moreover that two of the phrases catalogued there also appear in Shirai's drawings of a head of Buddha (1954) and of a column of the Parthenon (1955).[26]

[23]National Taiwan University Library, "深田文庫" Special Fukada Collection, accessed July 2, 2018, `http://tulips.ntu.edu.tw/screens/cg.html?t=16`.

[24]Chiaki Matsudaira, "Morning the death of Dr. Hidenaka Tanaka" 田中秀央博士の逝去を悼む, *Journal of Classical Studies* 23 (1975):167-169.

[25]Takahashi, *Orupeusu*, 100. Mizuhara was an architect who worked with Bruno Taut in Japan and was a close friend of Shirai.

[26]Kawazoe, *Sono sekai*, 344.

It is doubtful that the Latin language itself was ever the main focus of discussion between Shirai and these scholars. Nevertheless, von Koeber's view that a knowledge of classical languages is indispensable for the study of Western history and philosophy was very much alive among the group. Through their feverish ambitions this early generation of academics left a profound legacy across many domains, not least in triggering a broad interest in the idea of civilizational roots, initially oriented towards Europe but eventually turning to Japan itself and the question of national identity, echoing an obsession with origins that had long marked the course of European modernity through thinkers like Rousseau, Goethe, and Laugier.[27] Shirai's Latin inscriptions can be seen in the context of this intellectual current, as a kind of response that transfigured it into an architectural problem through which he could explore his own ideas about the construction of cultural identity.

Philosophical and Architectural Interpretations

Despite the conspicuousness of these inscriptions in Shirai's work, few critics have expounded on them at any length, and even the readings that have been essayed tend to remain on the level of a speculative exegesis of the texts themselves, mostly detached from the immediate architectural context.[28] One excep-

[27]For a discussion of this theme in the context of European architectural history, see Barry Bergdoll, *European Architecture, 1750-1890* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[28] For example, Yūji Uematsu describes his personal satisfaction of having succeeded in reading the inscription "NOA sum salvatrix" on the NOA building shortly after the building was completed. Yūji Uematsu "NOA SUM," *Shinkenchiku* 49, no.12 (1974): 180-182. Kazuyuki Honda develops a broad conceptual interpretation of Shirai's work in terms of its symbolism and in par-

tion is Takahashi, who, as part of the appendix in his book of commentaries on Virgil's poem *Orpheus Myths*, proffered an analysis based on several astute observations concerning the material quality of the inscriptions and the idiosyncrasies of their physical implementation.[29] Nevertheless, while Takahashi's meticulous examinations bring to light many curiosities, the overarching narrative that he constructs still relies more on the abstract symbolic content of the inscriptions than on their embodied role as actors in an architectural theatre of space, texture, and experience. Viewing Shirai's oeuvre as a statement on humanism stemming from the lessons of World War II, he proposes the notion of a ruin as an unifying theme that was initially and most potently expressed in the architect's 1955 Hiroshima peace memorial project, the Temple of Atomic Catastrophes, and sub-

ticular the idea of persona, which had been taken up by Shirai himself and appears for example in the phrase "Anima et persona" printed on the cover of his monograph on Kaishōkan, the computer tower he designed for the Shinwa Bank in Sasebo. See Kazuyuki Honda, "Gyakko no perusona, zoku: Seinaru kūkan no yohaku ni" 逆光のペルソナ：続・聖なる空間の余白に, *Kenchiku bunka* 31, no. 351(1976): 48-52. See also Seiichi Shirai and Isamu Kurita, "Gendai kenchiku to seinaru mono" 現代建築と聖なるもの in Shirai et al. , *Shirai Seiichi kenchiku o kataru*, 238-239. More recently Kenjirō Okazaki, in speculating about Christian influences on various aspects of Shirai's architecture, attributes the source of "Amor omnia vincit" not to Virgil but to the Swiss philosopher Carl Hilty, whose grave is inscribed with the phrase written in this particular word order that permutes the Virgilian original, and construes the words persona and anima from the Kaishōkan book in theological terms, with the Trinity representing three different persona sharing the same anima. See Kenjirō Okazaki, "Geijutsu no jōken: Shirai Seiichi to iu mondaigun (kōhen)" 芸術の条件：白井晟一という問題群（後編）*Bijutsu Techō* 美術手帖 63, no. 949 (2011):184, 191.

[29]Takahashi notes a missing letter *S* in an inscription on the computer tower Kaishōkan, defaced letters in an inscription at the Shizuoka City Serizawa Keisuke Art Museum (1981), the suffix indicating female gender in the word "salvatrix" engraved on the small sculpture embedded on the exterior brick wall of NOA, and the age of the column that Shirai used as a model for the one in the main exhibition room of the Serizawa Keisuke museum in Shizuoka, which Takahashi estimated to be from around the eleventh century given the use of the historical lowercase r (the "rotunda r") together with the image of pigeons on the capital, which supposedly disappeared in later ornamentation. The female ending of "salvatrix" had already been noted by Uematsu in 1974. For Takahashi's discussion on Shirai's use of Latin inscriptions, see Takahashi, *Orupeusu*, 98-113, and Uematsu, "NOA SUM," 182.

sequently inflected in various forms across several projects, from the deliberate defacement of an sculpted capital in the Shizuoka City Serizawa Keisuke Art Museum (1981) to a missing letter in an engraving on a fountain structure inside the same building and a similar elision over the entrance of the Kaishōkan computer tower at the Shinwa Bank headquarters (1975), the latter of which is the trigger of Takahashi's whole discussion. These details are woven into a poetic montage together with Western literary and philosophical references such as Georg Simmel's essay on ruins, Dante's Purgatorio, Karl Popper's notion of optimism, and Johan Huizinga's historical sensationalism, all of which are seen to resonate with Shirai's architecture through shared ideas and vocabulary.

Even if Hiroshima can be said to haunt all of Shirai's works, Takahashi's metonymical associations leave open many questions surrounding the slippery but critical gap between the driving programmatic ideas and the final form of a project, and in particular about the intentionality behind Shirai's idiosyncratic corruptions of Latin text. In the case of the Serizawa Keisuke museum, for instance, the allusion to the idea of ruin in the hacked capital can be alternatively framed within a more expansive reading of the museum as a dramatization of the concept of picturesque landscape garden that has been coordinated by a whole sequence of events invested with symbolic content.[30] The two structures in the museum bearing Latin inscriptions, the circular fountain-temple and the medieval column with the defaced capital, combine together with a pseudo-Gothic fire-

[30]Takahashi does comment on the novel role that ruins play in the landscape paintings of Claude Lorrain but does not take up the picturesque as an architectural theme in this way.

place stripped of ornamental detail to prompt, both through the eclectic historical references in their imagery and the tension in their relative placement, an interpretation of the entire museum as a condensed reproduction of a picturesque promenade that carries the visitor in a serpentine route through the nested exterior stone walls and then deep into the interior of the complex. At the same time, the museum has been charged with the atmosphere of a Japanese tea house through details such as the natural beige tones, the characteristic arched doorways, and the modulation in height and texture of the ceiling. This artful fusion of two distinct traditions that share a common programmatic concern for the integration of movement and symbolic content is in fact but one example of a recurring theme involving the simultaneous reliance on and ultimate subversion of the historical authority of cultural signifiers through the staging of an elaborate architectural game of juxtaposition, inversion, and assimilation.

Another figure who sought to give an account of the role of text in Shirai's work is Noboru Kawazoe, an architecture critic and longtime acquaintance of the architect who, as the chief editor of the journal *Shinkenchiku*, helped to create an image of Shirai as a visionary by inviting him to contribute what became a hugely influential essay on Jōmon aesthetics that radically reconfigured the terms of the tradition debate in the 1950s.[31] In his essay "The philosophy of an individual" (Kotai no shisō), Kawazoe weaves together historical and biographical details to

[31]Seiichi Shirai, "Jōmon teki narumono: Egawa shi kyū-Nirayamakan ni tsuite,'' 縄文的なるもの：江川氏旧韮山館について *Shinkenchiku* 31, no.8 (August, 1956): 4. Kawazoe explains his role in the tradition debate in "Kawazoe Noboru oraru hisutorī," Oral History Archives of Japanese Art, March 24, 2009, accessed July 3, 2018, http://www.oralarthistory.org/archives/kawazoe_noboru/interview_01.php

portray Shirai as an esoteric architect who aims to convey philosophical thoughts through the symbolic mediation not only of text and emblems but also of iconic architectural elements which carry historical memory and authority. [32] He states,

> What one notices in the work for Chūōkōron is the sheer number of colophons he designed for this publisher. When I looked around casually, I could find four kinds in the Roman alphabet, two kinds in the form of a relief medal, three kinds of sketch, counting nine in total. With more careful research, I think more would turn up. This indicates the strong interest Seiichi Shirai had for colophons, and it is interesting to note that their designs are not in the form of an abstract diagram as in the family crests in Japan but are rather based on text or a concrete object. This is because for him, the condensed form is something akin to "solidified philosophy" even if the colophon is a two-dimensional entity. It seems Shirai's thinking is that an abstract diagram can become a sign but cannot narrate philosophy, and that only things such as text and concrete objects can narrate philosophy. Maybe the design of these colophons should be discussed together with the Greek columns, [the cover design of the journal] *Shinkenchiku* that used the characters of the journal's name as a relief, the cover design of the journal *Kindai kenchiku* with Leonardo da Vinci's polygon, and the logo for the Shinwa Bank, also based on da Vinci.[33]

At another point, Kawazoe implicitly suggests that the doves in the drawings that Shirai prepared for the cover and the frontispiece of what has now become the paperback series Chūōbunko are symbolic of peace, not on account of Western convention per se but rather because these drawings were done around the same time as the Hiroshima peace memorial project and also because the one

[32]Kawazoe, *Sono sekai*, 323-343. One might infer Kawazoe's stance from the suggestive choice of the word kotai in the title, which not only conveys the distinctness of an individual but also emphasizes the presence of a body ("tai") which defines the individuality.

[33]Kawazoe,"Kotai," 327.

on the frontispiece resembles Picasso's *Dove of Peace* (fig. 9 and 10).[34] Picasso's works on the theme of peace as symbolized in the combination of a dove and a human face would likely have been known to Shirai from the art magazine *Mizue*, which reported on Picasso regularly and in 1952 featured a selection from Picasso's lithograph series *The Face of Peace* that illustrated a publication of Paul Éluard's poems.[35] Moreover, the short text that accompanies the *Mizue* feature draws an analogy between Picasso's *Guernica* and the later *Hiroshima Panels* by Iri Maruki and Toshiko Akamatsu, which Shirai's *Temple of Atomic Catastrophes* was meant to house, and asks rhetorically, if somewhat obliquely, what might correspond to the latter paintings in the same way that Picasso's own *The Face of Peace* offers a response to *Guernica*.[36] Kawazoe's speculation about this source of inspiration and thematic resonance is furthermore supported by the unmistakable resemblance between the head of the dove on Shirai's Chūōbunko cover and the one in Picasso's *Colombe volant à l'arc en ciel* (Dove Flying with Rainbow) from 1952 (fig. 11 and 12), as well as Shirai's obvious appropriation of a head from Picasso's lithograph *War and Peace* from 1954 for the frontispiece of the paperback series Chūōkōron Shinsho (fig. 13 and 14).[37] This fragmentary quoting helps to demarcate some of the parameters of Shirai's views on copying for the sake of artistic production and is ironically evocative of Picasso's utterance 'When there

[34]Kawazoe is probably thinking of *The Face of Peace* here.

[35]Tatsuo Ōshima 大島辰雄, *Picasso Heiwa no kao ni yosete* ピカソ平和の顔によせて, *Mizue* みづゑ 564 (August, 1952):38-47; Paul Éluard, *Le visage de la paix* (Paris : Édition Cercle d'Art, 1951).

[36]"Heiwa o inoru 'genbakudō'" 平和を祈る「原爆堂」, *Asahi shimbun* (March 5, 1956) posted at `https://fine.ap.teacup.com/maruki-g/1653.html`, accessed on May 3, 2019.

[37]The lithograph "War and Peace" accompanied the book by Claude Roy, *La Guerre et la paix* (Paris: Éditions Cercle d'Art, 1954).

is anything to steal, I steal."[38] Such details, however, can only offer limited insights into an architectural program that, as I argue, ultimately puts into doubt the possibility of communicating or even assembling a unitary narrative, philosophical or otherwise, through representational means that bracket out the wider spatial, material, and tectonic context.

One example illustrating this narrative opaqueness is Shirai's calligraphic rendering of the word "Myōhō" on a scroll that decorated the entrance wall of his residence in Ekoda, Tokyo (fig. 15). This word would have been commonly recognized as being part of the Japanese title of the Lotus Sutra, a scripture which holds absolute authority within the influential Nichiren sect of Buddhism that originated in the Kamakura era. However, Katsuko Ishizawa, one of the former graduates of the Kyoto Kōtō Kōgei Gakkō, asserts that it would have been obvious to alumni that "myoho" is a symbol for the district of Matsugasaki in Kyoto to which their school relocated after Shirai graduated.[39] Every summer at the end of the Bon festival in Matsugasaki the two Chinese characters "myō" and "hō" are lit up in fire at a giant scale on the slope of the mountains surrounding the district (fig. 16). In a nostalgic speculation, Ishizawa imagines that Shirai must have quietly followed the remarkable institutional growth of their alma mater over the years and regards the calligraphy as a testimony to the sentiment of wonder that

[38]Euripides Altintzoglou, *Portraiture and Critical Reflections on Being*, (New York: Routledge, 2018), 89.

[39]Katsuko Ishizawa, "Shirai Seiichi wa kokō dewa nakatta: Mukai Kanzaburō kyōju to sugoshita ōbeiseikatsu" 白井晟一は孤高ではなかった。向井寛三郎教授と過ごした欧州生活：会誌の行間に秘められた同窓会の意義 *KIT Dōsōkaishi* KIT 同窓会誌 1 (2007): 23, accessed July 12, 2016, `https://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/spot/festival/gozanokuribi.html`.

he must have felt in witnessing the school's development. Whatever the architect's original intention, this ascription of biographical significance exposes the perils of attempting to construe Shirai's texts and iconography as a composite expression of a coherent authorial voice.

The understanding of Shirai's texts as irreducibly fragmentary and narratively ambiguous is moreover consonant with Takahashi's suspicion that the architect used Tanaka's dictionary as a catalogue for selecting the Latin dicta to incorporate into his designs. As free-floating quotes without an integrative meaning, Shirai's inscriptions can be interpreted as a second-order expression of the very idea of maxim. This abstract reading and its attendant effects of aura and fascination certainly play an essential part in Shirai's exploration of the architectural potential of the physical implementation of text. Mizuhara accounts for the textual fragmentation by explaining Shirai's use of literary sources as a pretext for expressing his love of words through a process of objectification in which meaning is aggregated not at a literary level but rather in formal and material terms. Disputing one critic's characterization of Shirai as a poet, Mizuhara asserts that, for Shirai, words were "material not for abstractions but for concretization."[40] Unlike a poet, who creates beauty by stringing together words in their literary capacity, Shirai beautifies the fragments through a material staging that celebrates their free-floating state.[41] In particular, Shirai's calligraphy was a "loquacious expression of independence from writing and letters" (不立文字の饒舌), not deserving

[40]Tokugen Mizuhara, *Shirai Seiichi no kenchiku to hito: Jōmon teki narumono* 白井晟一の建築と人：縄文的なるもの (Tokyo: Sagami Shobo, 1979), 105.
[41]Ibid., 106.

any commentary or interpretation.[42] It is Shirai's atomistic brand of logophilia that compels him to "represent words in [physical] letters like he thinks about the material finish [in architecture], similar to the ways in which he loves stone and trees."[43] This sentiment towards the physical object was also operative in Shirai's manner of collecting antiques, which according to his son Ikuma were acquired not with regard to provenance or age but rather through a visceral attraction that prizes "the encounter with the 'thing' itself." [44] Shirai himself viewed his architecture not as a simple reflection or expression of authorial intentions but rather as a locus of communicativity where an individualized dialogue between architect and visitor could take place. In the aforementioned interview with Tanigawa, Shirai elaborates on his response to the question of how he felt about the engraving of Latin inscriptions on buildings by saying,

> I always say if there is something you want to ask, please ask the architecture I have made. It is not the case that [the architecture] is equipped with an accessory electronics function that can narrate what lies within the designer's heart. Whatever the thought, even a simple intention regarding the work, it would be impossible [for the work] to stand for it. My impolite expression to ask the building itself is really to say that I believe in the possibility of a certain communication and dialogue between maker and beholder depending on the responses felt through each individual's subjective experience mediated by space and that there is a possibility for a catechism that extends widely and sinks deeply depending on the inspiration gained through a spatial experience that is in all likelihood a one-time-only

[42]Shirai apparently did not affirm of reject Mizuhara's characterization of his calligraphy. Tokugen Mizuhara, "Shirai sensei no sho," 白井先生の書 in *Koshikyo shojō 2* 顧之居書帖 2 (Tokyo: Keishōsha, 1976), 91.

[43]Mizuhara, *Kenchiku to hito*,105-106.

[44]"Shirai Seiichi: Bi no wasure gatami," *Geijutsu Shinchō* 62, no. 2 (2011): 88.

event.

> There are problems in saying that the work is a critique. If I have said until now that no intentions can be reflected in the work itself even though the work is nothing other than myself, it is to express my desire to have the meaning of the critique understood along the lines of the paradoxical development that the work itself is a critique of the exterior, and then of the interior, in other words, a necessarily self-reflexive critique.[45]

For Shirai, the dialogue between the architect and the individual is fundamentally shaped by a subjective experience that is first and foremost mediated by space and form. In a convoluted dialectic, the possibility of textual communication, with its logocentric basis in an authorial source, has been usurped by a craft-driven ethos which seeks a more visceral and direct form of communication through an intense architectural engagement modulated by the physical realization and contextualization of text. It is within the material craft of the work itself, whether architecture or text, that Shirai says that he developed his critique of the world and of himself, leaving us to inquire about the nature of this critique and how it is expressed in specific ways through form.

Geometry

It is particularly telling that Shirai, in his response to Tanigawa's question about Latin inscriptions, reframed his answer in terms that apply to his work in general. In fact, on more than one occasion he expressed the view that there is

[45]Tanigawa, "Shi to kenchiku," 54.

no distinction between architecture and lettering.[46] One manifestation of this collapsing of categories can be seen in the aforementioned dove design that Shirai drew for the publisher Chūōkōron for use on its covers, a design which still survives today as an icon on the paperback series Chūō-bunko (fig. 11). The letters of the publisher's name are placed inside the area of the frontally oriented dove's breast, with the appearance of having been drawn in a subtractive way against the darker shading of the background. They are presented not as an intelligible sequence of letters but rather as discrete lattice points forming an inverted triangle, with the evenness of the lattice having been subtly perturbed in the top line so as to accommodate the letter count while maintaining the integrity of the triangle in a kind of optical illusion. The triangle of letters nestles inside the larger triangle defined by the wings and shoulders, while at a finer scale this geometric feature gives way to a curious unevenness in the treatment of individual letters. The *u* in the upper right corner almost appears to have been drawn by erasing the background shading, producing a flat spectral effect, while the *n* at the bottom has been heavily delineated in a way that suggests the three-dimensionality of applied architectural lettering. The three *o*'s decorated with a dot in the middle appear as geometric icons that recall the astronomical symbol for the sun or the Cyrillic "monocular *o*," and together act as visual punctuation for the other letters. This effect and the heightened presence of the lone capital letter *r* combine to destabilize the overall vertical symmetry in a further cognitive distraction from

[46]For example, see Shinpei Kusano, Seiichi Shirai, and Osamu Kurita, " Kenchiku to shi no genshitsu" 建築と詩の原質 in *Shirai Seiichi kenchiku o kataru: Taidan to zadan* 白井晟一建築を語る：対談と座談 (Tokyo : Chūōkōron Shinsha, 2011), 64.

the spelling out of the publisher's name.

This short-circuiting of intelligibility is reprised in the geometric arrangement, remote placement, and coarsely textured material support of the letters of the phrase "NOA sum salvatrix" which can be discerned on a phallic stone sculpture that sits in a second story niche within the exterior wall of the NOA building (1974).[47] The letters, which are etched onto the middle neck portion of the sculpture, have been distributed in groups of three across five lines which have been vertically compacted and collectively form an upright rectangle consistent with a sketch of what appears to be an emblem for the building (fig. 17).

N O A
S U M
S A L
V A T
R I X

In reporting on his first-hand experience, the architect Uematsu writes that it was only upon closer inspection that he discovered the inscription, after having decided that the sculpture might hold the key to Shirai's true intentions behind the design of the building, and that he had to resort to the use of binoculars to make out the text.[48]

Shirai's penchant for the geometric configuration of text was in fact extensively explored in book design, an activity he began in 1936 after his return from

[47]The building was designed in collaboration with Takenaka Corporation. See Takashi Hasegara, "NOA biru o mite" ノア・ビルを見て, *Kenchiku bunka* 29, no. 33 (Nov. 1974): 72.
[48]Uematsu "NOA SUM," 181-182.

Europe, most likely inspired by his brother-in-law Kōichirō Kondō, who as an artist had already been designing and illustrating novels such as Sōseki Natsume's *Botchan*.[49] The dove colophon was but one of many designs that Shirai created in the late 1950s in a burst of production for the publisher Chūōkōron, whose president had earlier commissioned a summer residence in Karuizawa from Shirai the architect.[50] Shirai's cover designs generally project a sober minimalist demeanor, often playing off the text against a single emblem, drawing, or other kind of graphic. On the cover and slipcase he experimented with a variety of compositional and scaling effects in the presentation of the title, which might be printed in Japanese, a foreign language, or both, and in a linear, rectangular, horizontal, or vertical configuration, with a tendency to concentrate the visual interest in the centre.

A striking early example from 1936 that is almost manifesto-like in its provocativeness is the design that Shirai did for the cover and slipcase of *Aijō* (love), a volume of short stories written by Fumiko Hayashi, Shirai's romantic companion during his European sojourn (fig. 19).[51] On the slipcase Shirai concentrates the entire mass of the composition in a single central red dot that appears to be alternately riveted to and floating within the expanse of the background cardboard surface, which has been left empty except for the six vertical black characters at the bottom left corner that discretely spell out the author's name and the subti-

[49]Natsume Sōseki, *Manga: Bocchan* (Tokyo: Shincho-sha, 1918).

[50]For examples of Shirai's book designs, see the exhibition catalogue *Shirai Seiichi: Seishin to kūkan* (Kyoto: Seigensha, 2011) and *Shirai, ima: Shirai Seiichi no zōkei* SIRAI, いま白井晟一の造形 (Tokyo: Tokyo Zōkei Daigaku, 2010).

[51]The book credits its design to Yōsuke Minamisawa, which was Shirai's pseudonym.

tle *tanpenshū* (short stories). This single nipple, free of its areolar base, not only issues an erotic invitation to the content of the book but also speaks to the political volatility of the era in its reductive but highly potent iconography, echoing first and foremost the red-disk-on-white design (hinomaru) which had been adopted as the national flag during the Meiji era.[52] In the mid-1930s, the imagery of the hinomaru began to acquire increasingly political overtones that must be seen within the context of the impending militarization of the government and the breakout of the Second Sino-Japanese War, when the flag was put to overtly propagandistic uses.[53] At the same time, given Shirai's involvement in the publication of the weekly newspaper *Berlin Shūhō* that was run by the journalist and anti-Nazi labour activist Tōmin Suzuki and disseminated within the Japanese expatriot community in Berlin, and given Shirai's subsequent plans for moving to the Soviet Union and his later participation in a short-lived commune near Mount Kiyosumi in Chiba, one cannot help but also see in the smallness of the red dot a symbolic token of the crackdown on communists in Japan that began with the mass arrests in the March 15 incident (*San ichi go jiken*) of 1928.[54] Removal of the

[52]Junkō Kō, "The Significance of the Japanese National Flag and Press Reports in War : Focusing on the period from 1937 to 1945," *Higashi ajia kenkyu* (East Asian studies: Review of Asian Research Institute, Osaka University of Economics and Law) 58, 2013, 1-21.

[53]For example, in 1935 the youth magazine *Shōnen kurabu* started a cartoon series "Hinomaru Kinosuke" in which the protagonist is clothed in a kimono decorated with three rising suns. This magazine eventually became a military recruitment platform designed to instill a zeal for war from an early age. The proportions of Shirai's design also specifically resonate with the hinomaru bento, a simple lunch consisting of a red plum pickle on white rice which from 1939 until 1942 was served to school children on the first day of every month, designated as kōa kōhō-bi (day of patriotic services), which included other activities such as flag raising and shrine visits that were intended to express support for soldiers. According to Junkō Kō, it was during the Second Sino-Japanese war that the newspapers began to refer frequently to the Hinomaru flag.

[54]Noboru Kawazoe, "Shirai Seiichi ron nōto II," *Kindai kenchiku* 61,no. 4, (April 2007): 28.

book from its slipcase, however, reaffirms and advances the erotic theme by exposing the labial imagery in the middle of the cover: a bushy wreath in the shape of a biconvex lens cradles the title of the book in its cavity, impregnating the red dot on the slipcase with an additional menstrual connotation of blood.[55]

Such overt and loaded symbolism is rare among Shirai's book designs, but the rigorous use of elementary geometry persists across his oeuvre and in a way which increasingly subjects the formatting and placement of text itself to its compositional dictates. While some of the covers are conventionally minimalist in their simple announcement of the title in uniformly sized and spaced text, others employ manipulations of scale in the arrangement of letters, characters, and the occasional emblem-like graphic to achieve layouts that are subtly inventive in their variety, usually executed with a formal restraint but with occasional eruptions of carnal energy all the while adhering to a principle of visual economy. Echoing the *Aijō* design, on the centre of the slipcase front of Shōichi Kimura's 1958 book *Roshia-Sovēto Bungakushi* (The history of Russian and Soviet literature) Shirai has inscribed a Russian translation of the title in small red letters, arranged

[55]That Shirai had an intimate relationship with Fumiko Hayashi was noted by Kawazoe in Kawazoe, "Nōto II," 26-30. Takashi Hasegawa notes that several characters in Hayashi's fictional short stories appear to be modeled after Shirai. See Takashi Hasegawa, "Yobitateru chichi no jōsai: shirai shintei o megutte omoukoto" 呼びたてる父の城砦--白井新邸をめぐっておもうこと, *Kenchiku* 136, (Jan. 1972): 28-31. Hayashi's encounter with Shirai in Paris is chronicled in her diary from April to October, 1932, in which Shirai is referred to both by his name and by the initial *S*. See Hideko Imagawa, *Hayashi Fumiko Pari no koi* 林芙美子巴里の恋：巴里の小遣ひ帳、一九三二年の日記、夫への手紙 (Tokyo: Chūōkōron Shinsha, 2004) 116-179. See also Imagawa's commentary, ibid., 242-252. The story "Izumi" (fountain) in *Aijō* appears to be based on the relationship between the author and Shirai. It is about an affair the protagonist has in France with a young man who was going to study architecture in Germany. At one point the young man expresses his concern over the fate of the labourers.

in four justified lines typeset with progressively condensed spacing, forming a sharp-edged seal-like rectangle with an increasing density towards the bottom that serves to ground it (fig. 20).[56] This local stability is unsettled, however, by the position of the Russian text as the bottom vertex in an inverted equilateral triangle completed by the black letters of the Japanese title printed in one line across the top of the slipcase.

What can be seen here, in a nascent form that will play out more fully in later designs and come to inform many of his architectural projects, is the Apollonian/Dionysian-like dialectic that Shirai articulated in the 1956 essay "Jōmon teki narumono" using the ancient historical periods of Jōmon and Yayoi as aesthetic categories. The idea of formulating these two categories and pitting them against each other as a means for rethinking the role of tradition in contemporary artistic production traces back to a 1952 essay by the artist Tarō Okamoto. The Jōmon was taken by Okamoto to stand for things that are powerful, dynamic, free, and three-dimensional, qualities which he recognized in the earthenwares of the hunter-gatherer era that the name designates, and the Yayoi for things that are harmonious, delicate, formal, refined, static, geometric, and planar, qualities which he perceived in art forms that had come to be regarded as purely and iconically representative of the Japanese and which, in his mission to create a new tradition, he wished to dispel from his artistic production because of their association with the anti-democratic feudal system thought to have begun in the agrarian Yayoi

[56]The exhibition catalogue *SHIRAI ima* contains a good collection of photographs of books designed by Shirai. My discussion is stimulated in part by its presentation; Shōichi Kimura, *Roshia-Sovēto Bungakushi* (Tokyo: Chūōkōron, 1958).

era.[57] Despite the shared vocabulary, however, there is a considerable degree of divergence in the ways that Shirai and Okamoto came to understand these terms, and even more so in the roles that these ideas can be seen to play in their work. For instance, while Okamoto's idea of Jōmon, inspired by the spatially twisted ornamentation of the pottery from this era, is associated with multidirectional dynamism and asymmetry, Shirai draws instead on the notion of strength, as illustrated in his predilection for stable, thick erect figures. And while Okamoto seems to aim to fill his paintings and sculptures with a pure Jōmon-inspired exuberance, and Shirai's design idiom is animated by a desire to communicate raw potency through form, material, and scale, Shirai's work is also often imbued at the level of spatial arrangement and surface treatment with a sensitivity to the tradition that Okamoto aligns genealogically with the Yayoi, however novel and metamorphic the physical implementation.

The kind of incursion of Jōmon energy into a framework of Yayoi-like soberness and sophistication that began to evolve as a design strategy in the *Aijō* and *Roshia-Sovēto* books can also be subtly discerned with Shirai's turn to calligraphy for the design of the slipcase of the 1971 book *Yumeno ukibashi* (the floating bridge in a dream) by Yumiko Kurahashi (fig. 21). By this time Japanese calligraphy had become a passion for Shirai and was beginning to constitute a significant part of his artistic production, with the first of three books of his own works having been published in the preceding year. The title of Kurahashi's book is laid out

[57] Tarō Okamoto, "Jōmon dokiron," *Mizue* 558, (Feb., 1952): 3-10, reprinted in *Bijutsu Techō* 794, no. 52 (2000): 51-66.

on the slipcase in a square configuration of four characters read from top to bottom and right to left, though with the conventionally diminutive hiragana "no" on the bottom right the characters do not sit neatly on a grid. This grouping evokes the four-character shūji that would have been practised at the time in elementary school calligraphy training, although it inverts the conventional tonal scheme with its light text on a darker background. While the spectral paleness of the characters reinforces the concepts of dream and buoyancy in the book's title, it also undermines the sense of strength and power exuded by their thick strokes and tectonic erectness, features which are typical of Shirai's calligraphy. At the same time, the title is constrained, rather soberly, to a central portion of the slipcase front, with its horizontal extent limited to about half the width of the surface.

In other examples, the geometry of the book cover, the poetic potential of the characters, and the literal meaning of the text reinforce each other in their expression. On the slipcase of Kiyoshi Jinzai's *Hai'iro no me no onna* (Girl with grey eyes) from 1957, Shirai has set the six characters that make up the title in bold Mincho typeface arranged vertically within a matrix consisting of three rows and two columns, with the characters pushed apart to the periphery to create a checker-like pattern (fig. 22). The light tone of the slipcase and even lighter tone of the text combine with the scattered distribution of the characters to suggest a weightless state of dispersed energy. In contrast, on the cover of the 1979 book *Kura* (storage), edited by Kawazoe and featuring photographs of Yasuhiro Ishimoto, Shirai scales his rendering of the hefty single embossed character of the title so that

it fits maximally within the rectangular frame of the cover, giving the design a monolithic quality that resonates with the focused nature of the subject matter (fig. 23).

This obsession with the possibilities afforded by text as a medium for exploring geometric form gives us some clues into Shirai's intentions behind the engraving of inscriptions on his buildings, and in particular illuminates how the "communication and dialogue between maker and beholder" might be played out through the subjective individual experience in which Shirai instructs us to locate the meaning of his architecture. From a purely graphic standpoint, the geometric rigour of Shirai's book designs can already be observed in an architecturally recontextualized form, for example, in the inscription "Amor omnia vincit" on the mezzanine-bridge at the Shinwa Bank headquarters, which favours the conventional Latin sentence structure of subject-object-verb over Virgil's original "Omnia vincit amor" so that the three words, by virtue of their incremental lengths, stack into an isosceles trapezoid.

A M O R
O M N I A
V I N C I T

While Virgil inverts the standard word order so as to conform to the poetic dicates of the dactylic hexameter, the arrangement used by Shirai is visually more effective in communicating a sense of groundedness and solidity. It is possible that Shirai was not aware of the original Virgilian order, though both versions are

listed in the Iwanami dictionary that Takahashi suspected Shirai to have regularly consulted in picking out Latin quotes for his buildings. Nevertheless, the Shinwa Bank inscription is consistent with the kinds of orthographic liberties that Shirai frequently took in his geometric deployment of text, as we will next see. [58]

In a similar vein, on the tholos in the Serizawa Keisuke Museum Shirai has engraved the dictum "Quod verum, simplex, sincerumque est, id naturae hominis et aptissimum" but with the word "hominis" curiously mutated to "homis" perhaps less as a metaphor for the larger idea of ruin, as Takahashi suggests, than as a result of compositional constraints. Indeed in an epigraph of the book documenting the design and construction of the museum one discovers that the dictum has been further tampered with to similar graphic ends, with the word "sincerumque" split into "sincerum" and "que" and one solitary comma appearing in the text, after the word "simplex" (fig. 24). [59] Although this book was not Shirai's own project, he is credited for both the cover and the epigraph, as well as the Japanese translation of the latter which can be found at the bottom of the subsequent page.[60] The epigraph spans across the entire page in one single line,

[58]The standard Latin version used by Shirai appears, for example, in the Swiss philosopher and moralist Carl Hilty's book *For Sleepless Nights*, which was first translated into Japanese in 1920 and was retranslated a number of times at the end of 1950s. It is commonly thought that von Koeber introduced Hilty's work in Japan. See Masaru Kubo, *Keberu hakushi zuihitsushu* ケーベル博士随筆集 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1980), 18-21. Kenjiro Okazaki draws the connection between the dictum and Hilty in his conception of the Shinwa Bank headquarters building as an outgrowth of the Temple of Atomic Catastrophes project in Hiroshima. See Okazaki, "Geijutsu no joken (kohen)," 184-186. The entry for "Amor omnia vincit" is found in Hidenaka Tanaka and Tarō Ochiai ed., *Girisha raten in'yogo jiten* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1937), 33, and "Omnia vincit amor" in ibid., 527.

[59]Sōroku Enya, *Sekisuikan: kenchiku o utau* 石水館：建築を謳う (Tokyo: Kanae Shobō, 1981).

[60]The translation reads 眞實にして純一・無辜なるものは、最も人間自然の性に合致するものである　キケロ.

crisply partitioning the space into two equal halves, with the inconsistencies and errors in the text helping to reproduce the visual balance and decorative effect of a uniformly perforated line, much in contrast to the sense of weight felt in the distribution of text in the mezzanine bridge inscription at Sasebo and on the slipcase of Kimura's book.

Dynamics

These kinds of two-dimensional compositional maneuvers, while they can be read in such an essentially static graphic way, do not always remain at this level and are often integrated into a broader dynamic conception of the work premised on the individual's physical engagement with it, whether it be book or building. This more expansive and fundamentally architectural usage of text and iconography, which one sees embryonically in the *Aijō* slipcase-and-cover sequence and more elaborately in the *Kaishōkan* volume to be discussed below, was pursued by Shirai in the built realm to a greater and greater degree of elaboration in conjunction with the increasing public visibility and budgetary scope of his projects. A key early example in this development is the Kankodō bookstore, where the ingredients for a fully fledged theatre of experience are present in a prototypical form. The northern facade publicly initiates a kind of promenade in the compositional tension between the Latin text that spans the entablature separating the two stories, the store's name in Chinese characters on the central wall, and a Romanized version of the name on the window guard of the recessed second story

balcony window, and in the strategic placement of the exterior fountain, which in its singularity as an unexpected architectural feature visually draws potential customers to the two angled entrance doors on either side of the central wall, whether through a parallax effect in the case of the left one or through a direct indication by physical proximity in the case of the right one.[61] Once inside, and independently of the choice of left or right door, the path of the visitor is immediately confronted by one of the hefty structural columns that modulate the space in a grid pattern. Having circumvented this obstruction, one is greeted by a dramatic reverse staircase that invites one further into the interior and up to the second floor. The staircase itself, with its semi-circular landing that wraps around a central column and sits well inside the generous circular void which spatially connects the two floors, functions as a viewing stage from which the entire space of the two-level structure is completely revealed in a climactic panoramic flourish.

While text is essentially relegated in Kankodō to a relatively minor role of visual articulation in the staging of the promenade, in the Ōhato branch of the Shinwa Bank (1963) it more actively contributes to the instigation of an architectural event sequence in the way that it subtly directs the unsuspecting moving subject. The name of the bank is carved in two places on the outer exterior granite wall cladding, at opposite ends of the building, each around the corner from one of the two public entrances, which are connected by a free-standing one-story

[61] Arata Isozaki also notes the dynamic effect in many of Shirai's works of the approach to the entrance, which is often embedded obliquely into the facade. See Arata Isozaki, "Seisoku to shite no kenchiku 正息としての建築" in *Kaishōkan* ed. Kunio Tsuji (Tokyo: Chūōkōron, 1980), 110.

colonnade-canopy structure that in itself creates a miniature promenade designed to engage the visitor with the monolithic two-story volume that sits anchored behind it within a shallow pool. From a distance, the effect of the colonnade is to negate the mausoleum-like presence and rigorous symmetry of the main volume, so that this architectural statement rehearses in both phenomenological and schematically representational ways the kind of shift from facade to plan that John Macarthur has identified as an essential characteristic of the picturesque (fig. 26).[62] Almost imperceptible within the macroscopic visual field in which this confrontation occurs is the name of the bank in semi-cursive lower case Latin letters that has been discretely positioned on the austere leftmost exterior wall bordering the sidewalk, just below the cornice that extends to the right to form the canopy of the colonnade (fig. 25). A pedestrian approaching from this left side would immediately notice the bold relief of the bank's name protruding overhead from the otherwise featureless wall.[63] A closer inspection of the relief unexpectedly reveals another string of letters beneath it spelling out the branch name in upper case, incised in the granite with a faintness that almost resists photographic reproduction. At the other end of the building, the wall fronting the side street is articulated in a similar fashion with the bank's name in strong relief and the branch name delicately etched below it. Here, however, the granite panel supporting the text has itself been chiseled to create a recessed surface bordered by

[62]John Macarthur, *The Picturesque: Architecture, Disgust and Other Irregularities* (London; New York: Routledge, 2007).

[63]Unfortunately this effect has been mitigated by several distracting elements later added to the building, including an automatic teller machine on this facade.

a thin frame. Moreover, the text now appears in kanji, in the semi-cursive *gyōsho* style for the relief and in the more formal and angular *kaisho* style for the etching, paralleling the difference in treatment of the Romanized versions, and in particular the uncanny role reversal in script style in which the more intimate and personalized form has been assigned the foremost promotional task of announcing the bank's name. In each case, the extreme and disconcerting contrast in the relative visibility and physical quality of the two names, despite the monolithicity of their shared material support, makes it impossible to apprehend both within the same moment of perception. Indeed these disjunctive juxtapositions of text have the fundamentally anti-graphic effect of obliging telescopic shifts in the viewer's vantage point and physical relationship to the architecture, while simultaneously representing a graphic schematization of the very idea of incommensurable perceptual scales. Together with the diagrammatic statement that the bank's form initially impresses on the viewer from afar, they thereby serve to structure not only one's sensual experience of the work but also one's synthetic understanding of it as a telescopic event sequence that zooms in through discrete stages much like the frames of a storyboard. The building's expressive potential as a medium for representation has been played off in a reflexive and dialectical way against its basic function as a container of experience, with text having been deployed as a critical agent in exposing the paradoxical suspension of architecture between these two fundamental functions.

This use of text for the purpose of precipitating a certain kind of experience at once corporal and intellectual is elaborated in the NOA building through a more

complex dispersive strategy that engages the movement of the beholder across an ever larger spectrum of perspectival scales and can be viewed as a turning inside out of the English picturesque landscape garden. The building itself is formally configured as a tripartite structure comprising a heavy-set base faced in rugged hand-chiseled red bricks, an elliptical shaft sheathed with a smooth skin of light-absorbing blackened brass plates and randomly distributed slits of fenestration and girdled with a mullionless ribbon window two-fifths the way up, and a double-barreled aluminum-clad utility tower that rises slightly higher than the main shaft and gives the impression of providing it spinal support from behind (fig. 29). The name NOA appears repeatedly across these various exterior surfaces, like the compulsive branding of a personalized stamp, either incised or affixed in accordance with the material support and at a couple of places truncated or supplemented with additional text (fig. 18, 27, 28). It is most prominently displayed on the frontal face of the shaft just above the ribbon window, in lustrous and subtly serifed brass dimensional lettering that is visible from a distance and replicates, in a negative-to-positive cast form, the much smaller scale Roman-style cornerstone inscription "NOA BLDG 1974" that greets the visitor at the entrance of the building. This jewelry-like affixment of the letters *NOA*, which fails to clarify the building's programmatic function as an office tower, effects an uncanny inversion of scales, transforming the bare monolithic shaft into a precious and timeless object, apparently impervious to weathering, that one can almost imagine holding in one's hand. Similar dimensional lettering, now rendered in a stark white suggestive of industrial lacquering, has been fastened

at two different places on the utility tower, one halfway up on the northwest side and the other near the top on the southwest side. In contrast, the two versions of the building's moniker that grace the brick base, while likewise executed in Roman capital letters, have been carved by hand, the one inside the entrance arch reading "NOA BLDG 1974" engraved on the continuous string of cut stone that wraps horizontally around the entire facade and the other, consisting of single "N," embossed on the nodding head of the phallic figurine nestled in the exterior wall niche and dominating the barely discernible inscription "NOA sum salvatrix" on the neck below it in a way that echoes the perceptual disjunction in the Ōhato bank signage.

NOA and Sign Architecture

The unusual quality of the signage was recognized by the Japan Sign Design Association (SDA), which granted the building its gold prize in 1975.[64] In a round table discussion that was held on the occasion of the award, Shirai quickly shifted the emphasis from the narrowly conceived notion of sign as logo or text that was ostensibly the basis for the prize to a broader consideration of the representational function of the building as a whole.[65] He states,

[64]SDA is an organization whose stated aim is to improve and promote the spread of sign designs. See "About SDA(ENG)," accessed Feb. 5, 2018, `http://www.sign.or.jp/about-sda-en`.

[65]The stated aim of the prize was that it "seeks to select and honour the superior signage (sain) that extends the function of communicating information within the urban environment and contributes to an agreeable social life and to the promotion of the industry." See "K/B nyūsu, dai 9 kai SDA shō konpe boshū" K／B ニュース第 9 回 SDA 賞コンペ募集, *Kenchiku bunka* 30, no. 339 (1975): 43.

> That the NOA building is recognized and praised by you as a "sign architecture" is such an unexpected pleasure. Surely the most important internal theme for this piece of architecture was the face of the city. How should I put it; a building is not a sign, but I wanted to create one of those "guideposts [michishirube]." From the outset this was nothing other than a tenant office building. The reason why I dared to participate in the project, with its site of intangibly irregular form and a budget that only accounted for rational profit margins, is that I myself had such a long-standing desire to do such a building. Of course I only agreed under the condition that I be given absolute freedom with regard to the form [zōkei] and, although I am not Kobori Enshū, that the owner not show up until the work was completed.[66]

The building's psycho-geographical function as a marker was achieved not only through a jarring orchestration of material, form, scale, and colour that radically distinguished it from the surrounding buildings but also through a positioning and orientation of the tower shaft that takes advantage of the unusual corner location and terrain to maximize frontal visibility from the street approaching from the north. The exceptional width of the intersection on which the building sits, designed to accommodate a staggered street configuration, has ensured that the building's dark totemic presence continues to command the surrounding neighbourhood despite an increasing crowding of the skyline.[67] The fact that the intersection sits on a topographical saddle point, sloping downward towards the north and south and upward towards the east and west, enhances rather than detracts from NOA's status as a guidepost through the radical changes in profile

[66]Masaru Katsumi et al., "NOA biru o kataru," in *Shirai Seiichi no me II* 白井晟一の眼 ed. Shirai Seiichi Kenkyujo, (Kyoto: Dōhōsha, 1988), 109.

[67]The graphic designer Paul Brooks Davis was apparently excited about NOA, calling it the "black building." See Katsumi et al., "NOA biru o kataru," 110.

that it provides the perambulator visual access to.

Shirai was critical of contemporary Japanese architecture that propagated the formal homogeneity of international trends in a more or less imitative way and regarded the goal of design or form-making activity (zōkei) as the creation of a "symbol that even a child or a grandmother could understand."[68] While he claims that NOA's phallic form was essentially dictated by site regulations and programmatic directives and was not a mere expression of his fantasy, there is an obvious and frequently invoked allusion to the small roadside dōsojin deities that traditionally served to guide and protect travelers and are often associated with procreation. This connection is reinforced by the small figurine mise en abyme in the exterior wall, which Shirai describes as a jizō (Ksitigarbha) in reference to the stone sculptures that typically serve to commemorate the death of a child and, like dōsojin, can be found next to the road.[69] The moniker NOA on the other hand hints at another identity through its resonance with the biblical Noah, although Shirai insisted that "the NOA building is NOA and not NOAH" and that he does not regard the building as Noah's ark.[70] Concerning the genesis of the name, he explains,

> In any case, no such word as "NOA" exists. The reason why it is called so is because the proprietor of the building was named Nagao and he insisted that the building be called "Nagao biru" (Nagao building). I did not like the idea, so I thought it would be enough if the name shares the same initial "N" from Nagao. That's how I came up with

[68]Katsumi et al., "NOA biru o kataru," 110.
[69]Ibid., 109.
[70]Ibid., 110.

> NOA. This can also refer to Noah's flood and is pronounceable by children, and so...it is like a code. [71]

While it is through the functioning of the building as a code that Shirai envisioned its symbolic role, it is a code that is designed not to be unequivocally decipherable but rather as a loose semiotic matrix of metaphoric and metonymic allusions that serves to mediate the brute facticity of the building's presence without resorting to blatant imitation. Although he never denied the congruity of the various interpretations that have been proposed through the building's form or its name, Shirai adamantly objected to ascribing a unitary identity to the building and brushed off any attempt to do so as futile given that the creator himself is "a bundle of contradictions."[72] In the absence of a single animating force behind the exterior form, the reception of the building as a cultural product becomes contingent on a subjective and fragmentary recognition of meaning through formal and textual contrivances that are suggestive enough to trigger the imagination but sufficiently abstract to allow for and even demand a personal interpretation. If in Saussure's theory of semiotics a sign is construed as a couplet consisting of signifier and signified, each defined in a differential way within the system of which it is part and mostly related to each other by way of convention, and we understand the physical reality of NOA and its composite cultural content according to this bipartite scheme, then the imbalance in determinacy and sta-

[71] Ibid., 110-111. The company's name was changed from Nagao Fudōsan (Nagao Real Estate Corporation) to NOA Building Corporation in 1985. See "NOA Building Corporation: History," accessed July 5, 2018, `http://www.noa-building.co.jp/history-en.html`.

[72] Katsumi et al., "NOA biru o kataru," 111.

bility between the signifier and signified in this case only serves to actively underscore the conventionality of the Saussurian contract uniting these two terms, especially given that in Saussure's theory NOA would qualify as a special type of sign ("symbol") which involves "a vestige of natural connection." This differential in determinacy between the unmistakable singularity of NOA's built form and the contradictions and inconsistencies of its possible cultural readings, in its effective dislodging of the signified from its Saussurian position of priority over the signifier, very much resonates with the critique of logocentricism that Jacques Derrida had been developing slightly earlier in the 1960s.[73] Rather than collapsing into a nihilist denial of communicability, the semiotic effect of this differential is to impregnate the almost alien novelty of the building's formal presence with an array of semantic potential by expanding the social and cultural parameters of its intelligibility, with the aim of capturing the personal imagination of each individual subject as a point of entry towards a more complex and physical engagement with the architecture.[74] Even though the building suffered an infliction a few years after its completion—the exterior wall beside the entrance archway was punctured, without Shirai's knowledge, so as to permit the installation of a display window—the building has otherwise maintained its original appearance in defiance of the dizzying cycle of demolition, construction, and renovation in

[73] I have not come across any evidence however to suggest that Shirai was aware of Derrida's influential work on this theme.

[74] Kazuyuki Honda also noted the incompleteness in the communicative power of the symbolism embedded in Shirai's work and used the phrase "anti-causal theoretic expression" (反因果論的表現) to refer to such symbols whose semantic content must be supplied by the receiver. Honda, "Perusona," 51-52.

central Tokyo, a testament to the effectiveness of Shirai's strategy for tapping into and expanding the cultural imagination to forge an indelible symbolic presence out of a sui generis architectural form.[75]

At another more strictly disciplinary semiotic level, NOA's monolithic brick-clad base naturally raises the issue of program and its architectural expression, of communicating function by means of exterior form and treatment, through its historically loaded imagery of the masonry wall, which has traditionally conditioned the distinction between inside and outside in Western architecture. Except for the display window that was added later without Shirai's consent, NOA is stubbornly mute in this regard, giving no indication of its program as a rental office building in complete rejection of the ideals of transparency and honesty that have driven much of the discourse around modern architecture. With the tenants denied the right to display a sign advertising their business or organization, the building's mundane commercial and functional aspects become completely eclipsed by its charismatic and suggestive physicality and the aura of its cryptic appellation.[76]

It is instructive to view this willfully program-obscuring use of form and text through the lens of one of the key points of reference for architectural discourse at the time, the article "Ugly and Ordinary Architecture, or the Decorated Shed" by

[75]Shirai complained about the alteration. See Seiichi Shirai, "Kenchiku wa dareno monoka" 建築は誰のものか (To whom architecture belongs?) in *Musō* 無窓 (Tokyo: Shōbun sha, 2010), 65.

[76]Anecdotally, the author has met someone who believed that NOA belonged to a religious institution. Hiroki Onobayashi called the building a kind of "angō" (a code or cipher) understood in the sense of Karl Jaspers' term "Chiffreschrift" as a message from a transcendental being. See Hiroki Onobayashi, "Kigō to angō: Shirai Seiichi no kenchiku sekai" 記号と暗号：白井晟一の建築世界, *Shōten kenchiku* (Nov. 1974): 119-122.

Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown and the book *Learning from Las Vegas* by Venturi, Scott Brown, and Izenour from which it was extracted, especially given the central role that text plays in their analysis. Venturi and Scott Brown propose the following categorical distinction between "duck" and "decorated shed":

> 1. Where the architectural systems of space, structure, and program are submerged and distorted by an overall symbolic form: This kind of building-becoming-sculpture we call the *duck* in honor of the duck-shaped drive-in, "The Long Island Duckling" illustrated in *God's Own Junkyard* by Peter Blake.
> 2. Where systems of space and structure are directly at the service of program, and ornament is applied independently: This we call the *decorated shed*.[77]

Venturi and Scott Brown explain that the mode of representation expressed by the idea of decorated shed is prevalent in many historical precedents like Gothic cathedrals as well as in the contemporary example of the Las Vegas strip, and that the decorated shed's adornments contribute a denotative complexity that enriches one's engagement with the architecture. These reflections set the stage for their critique of modernism, which they chastise for the way its reductivist focus on space, structure, and program had in many instances become perversely transfigured into a kind of pointless sculptural expressionism that eschews appliqué ornament and epitomizes the duck in its most abstract manifestation as pure connotation or "pure architecture."[78]

[77] Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas*, (Cambridge: MIT Press,1977), 87. The book includes the article "Ugly and Ordinary Architecture, or the Decorated Shed" by Venturi and Scott Brown, which appeared in the journal *Architectural Forum* in two parts in 1971 and contains much of the material discussed here.

[78] Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour, *Las Vegas*, 100.

How can one understand NOA in terms of this theoretical framework? Of course NOA is at a far remove from the type of American automobile-based urbanization that guided Venturi and Scott Brown's thinking, but it nevertheless offers a contemporaneous challenge to their theory of representation that can be positioned within an internationalized discourse on modernism. While Venturi and Scott Brown's interpretative scheme would seem to be of exemplary applicability in this case—the building appears to be a simultaneous and extreme embodiment of the ideas of duck and decorated shed through its sculptural extroversion and the would-be commercial branding of the applied text and iconography—the dichotomy between the two modes of expression is in fact subverted here through a dialectical fusion that turns their critique of modernism on its head. NOA certainly resides outside the boundaries of the modernism that Venturi and Scott Brown target given that its form is not derived, even nominally, from an imperative to express the architectural parameters of space, structure, and program, which Shirai accepted as mere practical constraints around which his theatre of experience and symbolic interaction would unfold. The forcefully connotative abstract expressionism through which Venturi and Scott Brown's modernist duck communicates its universality and revolutionary spirit is traded here for a richer and more denotatively suggestive abstraction involving sexual and iconographic allusions. On the other hand, the function of signage as the bearer of denotative meaning in Venturi and Scott Brown's Las Vegas model has been all but sabotaged in NOA, not simply because of the ambiguity in meaning of the thrice affixed moniker but more significantly because of the integral role the

lettering plays both in the perception of the building's duckness and in the simultaneous destabilization thereof through the effects of scale inversion noted previously. NOA's short-circuiting of Venturi and Scott Brown's dichotomy can be read out in the apparent randomness with which it crisscrosses the two columns of the binary table that they construct to identify the various points of opposition between the duck and decorated shed in their discussion of Paul Rudolph's Crawford Manor and their own Guild House.[79] NOA may look like a duck but it does not fly like a modernist duck, remaining enigmatically anchored, jizō-like, in its own geographic and cultural territoriality, suspended between the paradigms of a heroically expressive modernism and an incipient post-modernism whose emergence Venturi and Scott Brown's writing came to signal.

NOA and the Picturesque

In order to understand the way in which NOA does ultimately fit into the modernist enterprise, one must look back more radically to the latter's origin in the picturesque. The various instances of text distributed around the exterior of the building interact with the stroller not only one by one at a symbolic level but also collectively in choreographing a kind of promenade that links these symbolic events through a play of perceptual scales of the type we saw in the Ōhato bank but now with the additional dimension of compelling the observer to actively participate in the construction of meaning. This more complex architectural dynamic resonates with Neil Levine's insightful analysis of the landscape garden at

[79] Ibid., 102.

Castle Howard as an early harbinger of the fundamental contradiction between representation and reality that would come to haunt the modernist project, a contradiction of which Venturi and Scott Brown's diagnosis, for example, can be seen to be symptomatic. As Levine argues, Castle Howard takes priority in the development of the picturesque over the less revolutionary but more widely recognized example of Stowe in its signaling of a transition from the traditional practice of deciphering meaning according to pre-established codes to the modern one in which subjective observation and corporeal experience are integral to the process of signification. One can in fact naturally interpret NOA as an incarnation of the idea of picturesque landscape garden but now with the latter's mechanics of curiosity, movement, and surprise condensed into a single structure and the various textual events serving as follies. Whereas the follies in a garden such as Stowe are geographically dispersed and arranged along linear axes whose intersections stage discrete moments of discovery, in NOA the signs and engravings are all mounted on the same structure and are no longer as rigidly orchestrated through contrived visual means. The texts engage the beholder not through the kind of contrasts in script styles that one finds in the Kankodō bookstore and the Ōhato bank branch but rather through an eclecticism of colour, material, surface treatment, and letter count that, despite the uniformity in font, thwarts any function the signage might have as a commercial branding exercise.

This mapping of the picturesque garden that identifies text with folly actually turns the classical model inside out, like an inversion of the extended complex plane through a stereographic projection, in which the roles of the proximate and

the infinite have been reversed within the theatre of perception. While a pavilion in the picturesque garden model may be designed to excite the fantasy of a distant observer through cunning tricks of perspective and scale that contrive to create a deceptive grandeur from afar (one may think of the Gothic temple at Stowe or the Kleine Gloriette at Schoenbrunn) the genuinely monumental dimensions of the NOA building that would otherwise impress an observer approaching from the northern axis have been diminutized through the jewelrizing effect of the frontal logo, an architectural maneuver that is furthermore enhanced by the dōsojin allusion.[80] As Katsumi nostalgically describes it, the building is intimidating up close but has an inherently gentle shape, and seen from afar "it makes one inadvertently remember what was once forgotten."[81]

If instead of physical distance we take visibility as a metric for proximity that prods the beholder into motion, then NOA's texts, which are facing various directions and placed at different heights, are in fact not very close to each other, for at most one is discernible from almost any given viewpoint. The distribution of the texts on the building's surfaces introduces a genuinely three-dimensional quality to the promenade through the different inclinations in sightline that it induces, with the height of each placement controlling visibility and physical approachability for the stroller on the ground, who is no longer able to access these "follies" at close range as in a typical picturesque landscape garden. As in the Ōhato bank

[80] The plan of the Gothic temple at Stowe is a hyperbolic triangle. See figure 2 in Benton Seeley, *Stowe: a Description*, reprinted in *The Gardens at Stowe* ed. John Dixon Hunt (New York; London: Garland Publishing, 1982).

[81] Katsumi et al., "NOA biru o kataru," 110.

branch, there is an ideal perceptual scale at which each piece of text is designed to be seen, whether this scale places it at the very limits of legibility, as in the figurine engraving, or at close tactile range where the materiality and fabrication process can be felt, as in the entrance inscription, or pushes the promenade out into the city beyond the controlling hand of the architect, as in the dimensional lettering branding the building from afar. It is this dispersion of scales that facilitates the coexistence of distinct textual events across the surface of the building without the kind of aesthetic friction one is confronted with on the facade of the Kankodō bookstore. If, as Macarthur argues, the picturesque derives much of its innovative power from the priority it accords to the plan over the elevation, then the spatial and visual relations that guide the subject's experience of NOA break this mold through the elevation of text, in both the literal and figurative senses.[82]

Concomitant with this reimagining of the picturesque in NOA is an inversion of the political aspirations to which the English landscape garden originally gave formal expression. While the centrifugally expansive views in gardens such as Stowe and Castle Howard, often extending far beyond the property line through the use of a ha-ha, had the effect of arousing a sense of freedom and ownership that accorded with the liberal ideology of the Whigs, NOA's centripetal pull of the stroller's gaze from the surrounding heterogeneous urban context articulates a politically disengaged introversion and even asceticism that is oblivious to concerns outside of itself. The English garden model has thus been completely transformed into a different kind of typology that radically reworks the more direct

[82]Macarthur, *The Picturesque, 110.*

interpretations of earlier projects such as the Ōhato bank branch.

Book Design and the Picturesque

The one constant in Shirai's dialogue with the picturesque, beyond the simple desire to provide varied and unexpected vistas within an architectural promenade, was the aim of integrating text and movement, from the initial exploration in Kankodō and further development in Ōhato to the rich elaboration in NOA. The importance of text in this evolution is further attested to by the fact that the production of picturesque experience was not solely reserved for architectural works but is also manifest, somewhat surprisingly and in a necessarily simplified implementation, in the more rigid and intimate physical setting of book design. In fact the narrative of discovery programmed into the act of taking a book out of its case, opening the cover, and turning the pages provided Shirai with a natural platform for an expanded exploration of the picturesque. With the dynamical relationship between active subject and static object now reversed in this more condensed format, the perceptual play of scales becomes subordinate to the subtleties of font creation along with its attendant issues of craftsmanship and mechanical reproduction, which, while present and operative in a building like NOA, were pursued by Shirai with an almost pathological zeal in the graphic context of book design.[83]

[83]Shōji Usuda, a writer and graphic design editor, also notes the architectural character of Shirai's approach to book design, in particular in the emphasis given to narrative through the three-dimensional and layered qualities of the object, and does not think this to be coincidental. See Shōji Usuda, "Shirai Seiichi no sōtei: Harukana romanesuku no kaori," 白井晟一の装丁：はるか

One mature distillation of Shirai's architectural picturesque that combines a range of fonts, languages, and production methods is the book *Kaishōkan*, which he prepared as a document of his 1975 Shinwa Bank tower in Sasebo. On the light blue cardboard slipcase of this oversize but slender volume is a tipped-in bordered label soberly indicating the title, authors, and publisher in classical horizontal Minchō typeface. Removal of the book from its case reveals a reprise of the title on the dust jacket, this time in a vertical orientation and in the rustic style of the stone rubbing of Japanese calligraphy. A further unwrapping exposes the Latin words "Anima et persona" debossed in capital letters in a serif font on the cover of the book itself, laying bare the complementary concepts of soul and public character whose dialectical framework Shirai long saw as the intellectual sustenance of his work, with the Jungian terminology of this pair only eventually being adopted by Shirai, perhaps without coincidence, in the wake of its broader dissemination in Japan by Hayao Kawai in the late 1960s (fig. 30, 31). The communication between the architect and the reader in this procession is not simply accomplished though the meaning of the texts themselves, the last of which remains unexplained, and even difficult to parse from what Shirai has said in essays and interviews, but also crucially through the curiosity and physical engagement demanded of the reader, with the sequence of uncoverings becoming a theatrical enactment of the weight that Shirai ascribed to the Latin motto on the innermost layer, shifting the locus of meaning away from the directly literal and onto the relational and metalinguistic. This subjective investment in the con-

なロマネスクの薫り in *Shirai, ima*, 45-46.

struction of meaning, fundamental to the modernist legacy of the picturesque, distinguishes the Kaishōkan volume from the more conventionally programmed interface between reader and book in an earlier example like Aijo and rehearses the bold amalgamations, superimpositions, and material applications of text that we have seen in architectural settings like Kankodō, the Ōhato branch, and the NOA building.

While such a thorough absorption of the subject into the dynamic of Shirai's picturesque was the result of a gradual development over the course of his architectural production, from the very beginning of his career he had been exploring contrasting, opposing, or disjunctive forms and materials in the spirit of the eclecticism of the historical picturesque, with different scales of application and degrees of contiguity and with a will towards the creation of a kind of matrix of symbolic provocation. Fujimori for example describes the modestly sized early house project of Kankisō as combining an English Tudor-style facade, a Japanese straw roof, and a Spanish stucco application on brick, and as having been packed with an astonishing number of different shapes and stylistic details.[84] In Shirai's last completed project, the Serizawa Keisuke Museum, these types of juxtapositions, both formal and typological, become fully integrated into a theatre of movement and symbolic interaction that tightly interweaves the kind of spatial procession associated with the Japanese tea ceremony with stylistic and conceptual invocations of the picturesque garden.[85] The Shinwa Bank headquarters

[84]Fujimori, " Jōmon teki Narumono," 128; Terunobu Fujimori, "Seiichi kowai" 晟一こわい [Being afraid of Seiichi], *Kenchiku bunka* 40, no. 461 (1985): 14.

[85]The Serizawa Keisuke Museum will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

(1970) is another exercise in juxtaposition, this time complicated by additional constraints associated with the multiphase nature of the project, which began as an annex but then evolved into the construction of a pair of entirely new buildings erected in stages over eight years, to be finally completed five years later by the addition of the Kaishōkan computer tower. The initial two structures speak to one another through inversions of form, colour, and texture, the northern one consisting of an angular volume of smooth light-coloured Iranian travertine cantilevering out from a cylindrical base of smooth black granite, and the southern one reversing this attitude towards gravity with its gently distended rectangular mass in smooth dark bronze firmly nested in a base of roughly textured light grey granite that has been shaped like a cavetto molding.[86] (Fig. 32). Likening the additive design and construction process of this bank project with that of the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, Shirai reminisced,

> Among the exemplars of extension architecture [that builds upon an existing structure] is the Hagia Sophia. [With regard to the Shinwa Bank headquarters,] I cannot possibly hope to share the same luck, but for me I had no choice but to encourage myself by imagining the Constantinople basilica floating before my eyes. Moreover I had by that time come to think that the changes that seem fatal or the unhappy terms of the project as an extension, if they could be turned around and pursued, have the potential to become a motif that heightens the effect of the work. I then arrived at a dialectic that was the best I

[86]For a discussion of the masonry materials used in the Shiwa bank headquarters, see Yuki Tanda and Hiroshi Kawauchi, "About the expression of the stone by SHIRAI Seiichi," *Proceedings of annual research meeting Chugoku Chapter* 38, no.3 (2015): 965-968. The art historian Takashi Hasegawa proposed a gender-based interpretation of the pair as representing the characters of the aged couple Okina and Ouna from the classic Noh theatre, the former representing the male Okina and latter the female Ouna. See Hasegawa, "Seishun to enjuku no kisetsu" 青春と円熟の季節, in *Shutsuji*, 127-128.

> could produce, in which two towers with completely different qualities and textures were meshed together. Yet, while with regard to the first tower I was at some point ready to accept an arbitrary juxtaposition with the former headquarters, this time with the second tower, given that a single designer is to devise the plan, [I thought] it would only be permissible to create a building that can be organically integrated into a tight unity even if it has a completely different quality from the first tower. These buildings are full of shameful immaturities; still, with regard to the combination, I think I have achieved a composition that cannot be regretted.[87]

The kind of juxtaposition that Shirai employed almost intuitively in his early designs is now conceived as a fundamental strategy through which the architect can express his own authorial presence despite the inconsistencies, incoherencies, and contradictions in form, material, and style that the method necessarily gives rise to and even emphasizes and whose irresolvability Shirai would later affirm in his commentary on the NOA building.[88]

In the Kaishōkan volume, this architectural program is extended to the medium of book design through disjunctions in writing systems and styles which, despite the apparent lack of unifying language of form and material of the kind that couples the antipodal pair of buildings in the Shinwa Bank complex, are nevertheless conditioned by a similar dialectical attitude whose effect in this case is to pervert the relationship between craftsmanship and mechanical reproduction. A subtle statement on off-the-shelfness is already enacted on the book casing in the ver-

[87]Seiichi Shirai, "Shinwa ginko honten" 親和銀行本店 (Shinwa ginko headquarters) in *Muso* 無窓 (Tokyo: Shōbun sha, 2010), 41.

[88]This strategy of juxtaposition has precedents in the notion of "polarism" introduced in the late 1940s by the artist Tarō Okamoto as an attempt to integrate Surrealism and "Abstract Art" without compromising the characteristics of each. See the following chapter for further discussion.

tical elongations and stroke thickening of the Mincho title characters, whose robustness and emphatically erect posture endow them with a quality that is both tectonic and anthropomorphic. It is in the Latin inscription on the hard cover however that this graphic engagement with text has been pushed to an extreme. The font of this inscription originates from the cover of a book in Shirai's office and was reconstructed by Reiko Arimitsu, who worked as an intern at Shirai's firm in 1975. Using the found text as a guide, Arimitsu had drafted three versions of the phrase "Anima et persona" distinguished by differences in line thickness and concavity, in one of the cases producing a distended appearance that particularly captivated Shirai, who then selected it for the *Kaishōkan* cover (fig. 31, **??**).[89] The font appears to be based on the typeface inspired by Roman square capitals which was prominently featured in Frederick Goudy's popular book "The Alphabet" published in 1918, but its subtle articulation gives it a more architectural quality.[90] The complete flattening of the horizontal serifs is evocative of a more rigid and austere Times New Roman or Caslon Old Face, while the vertical strokes exhibit an unusual slight bulge which Arimitsu compares to the entasis of a Greek column. The overall sense of gravity and stability is also reinforced by the upper tapering of the oblique strokes. At the same time, the engineered imperfections of the slightly tilted foot serifs and baseline alignments, together with the fine wavy pattern delicately printed across the cover, have the effect of optically dislodging the letters from their material support. The crisp mechan-

[89] In a conversation with the author at Matsue, Tottori, June 23, 2017.

[90] Goudy's book, which begins with a discussion of the history of the typeface, would have aroused Shirai's interest. Fredric Goudy, *The Alphabet* (New York: M. Kennerly, 1918).

ical execution of the debossing belies the one-off handcrafting whose intention has been not to produce a mechanically reproducible typeface but rather to transfigure the individual characters beyond their strictly typographical function into soulful actors with their own extra-lexical communicative potential, however esoteric this program ultimately remains in this context.

Calligraphy and Gestalt

This kind of gestalt-driven transfiguration was pursued more visibly and vigorously in the calligraphy that Shirai began to produce in his mid-fifties. As an amateur unfettered by the conventions of the profession and driven by an extreme single-mindedness, Shirai adopted this medium as a vehicle for making similar kinds of aesthetic statements as in his architecture, which he saw as being equivalent to text in terms of formal and material potential, and after ten years began presenting his works publicly in art galleries and in book form.Regarding the practice of writing characters as an outlet for expressing the hidden corporal potentialities within everyday human existence, he integrated the activity into the basic rhythm of his daily life, often spending more than ten hours and generating some one hundred pieces in a single day. In Shirai's calligraphy, which was always written in kanji using traditional ink and paper, the infusion of character in characters was achieved not through a painstaking and subtle manipulation of shape as in the Latin inscription "Anima et persona" but rather through an evolutionary process in which a small number of specimens, prized for their aesthetic

and intellectual appeal, are singled out amongst an enormous production.[91] Most of Shirai's works are *shōjisū-sho* (小字数書), a format consisting of one or two characters that was taken up in the 1950s and 60s by avant-garde calligraphers such as Morita Shiryū and Teshima Yūkei, who aimed to establish calligraphy as a universally accessible art in a period in which the Japanese government was proposing a radical reform of the writing system and global spectatorship was rapidly increasing through a series of international exhibitions.[92] This format naturally highlighted the actual physical act of production by intensifying the indexical drama of the strokes, often at the expense of the lexical.

Shirai's *shōjisū-sho* are quickly executed on paper heavy enough to withstand his aggressive style, sometimes on the more absorbent backside so as to deliberately create a bleeding effect and sometimes using an old brush with splayed tip so as to accentuate the roughness of his strokes. One of his less conventional techniques, which he combined with the scratchy texture of separated bristles to striking effect in a few exceptional cases, was to dip the brush into water before a character was completely written and thereby dilute the remaining strokes, permitting him to render various effects of chiaroscuro. The general meatiness of his strokes and the unusual emphasis on verticality in the shape of many of the characters resonate with the muscular Jōmon energy that Shirai saw as an under-

[91] Kosuke Hato, "The Meaning of Practicing Calligraphy in the Written Works of Architect Seiiti Sirai: Focusing on the Relation to the Theory of Tradition," *J. Archit. Plann. AIJ.* 81, No.719, 179-186, accessed February 21, 2017, `https://doi.org/10.3130/aija.81.179`

[92] Some of the international exhibitions are *Japanese Calligraphy* at Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1954, the Sao Paolo Biennale in 1957, and Brussel's Worlds Fair in 1958. See Bert Winther-Tamaki, *Art in the Encounter of Nations: Japanese and American Artists in the Early Postwar Years*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001), 77, 79.

recognized force in the cultural development of Japan in dialectical opposition to the more sophisticated and serene aesthetics originally identified by Okamoto with the Yayoi. This heft in line and uprightness in structure act in concert with the translucency of the ink to produce an illusion of depth and sense of perspective, transforming and re-iconizing each character into a representation of a three-dimensional entity with a distinctly architectural disposition in its evocation of gravity and in the structural assemblage of the strokes (fig. 33)[93]

This architectonic exploration of the formal possibilities of kanji, with its own logic of construction that has little to do with the evolution of the characters from their pictogrammatic or ideogrammatic roots, is enhanced by the right-to-left execution that Shirai adhered to when writing character couplets in horizontal mode, which would have been disconcerting to many readers in the 1970s or afterwards. The right-to-left reading is in accord with the Hengaku signs that Shirai specifically sought out in his excursions to Buddhist temples and which served him as unorthodox calligraphic models, and contra the postwar trend towards the consolidation of a left-to-right convention in printed materials. This bucking of convention blocks the immediate apprehension of the couplet as a piece of text and thereby compels more immediately formal reading of the characters as images.

[93]The architectonic quality of Shirai's characters has been noted by numerous people. Mizuhara, for example, compared Shirai's rendition of "Sōran" (喪乱), which refers to the seventh century Chinese calligrapher Wang Xizhi's book of fragmentary letters Sōranjō, with a flying buttress of a Gothic cathedral, and his "Anan" (阿難, Ananda) with a type of masonry building found in India (Fig. 33). The architect Arata Isozaki also speculated that there is a close connection between the two long strokes in the version of the word Buddha that appeared in Shirai's 1978 book and the elongated form of the Kaishōkan tower at Sasebo (1975). See Isozaki, "Seisoku to shite no kenchiku," 103. Isozaki further notes the emphasis given to the vertical and the horizontal in many of the calligraphic works.

While Shirai did not exclusively concentrate towards this format—both horizontal and vertical writing modes appear in his three books of calligraphy, of which the first contains five horizontal works and twenty vertical, the second strictly adheres to the horizontal format, and the third reintroduces the vertical orientation for eight out of its thirty works—its exploitation of socio-political circumstance in the service of formal image-making does resonate with his architectural tactic of using cultural markers to both condition and manipulate the physical and intellectual engagement of the viewer through the play of material, space, and form.

Legibility and Communicativity

Despite his dedication to the creation of novel images through an intense exploration of the formal potential of kanji, and despite mannerisms that occasionally led to a violation of calligraphic rules and rendered some of the characters illegible, Shirai's practice was fundamentally framed by a respect for the tradition of the medium and its communicative role.[94] Against avant-garde movements in calligraphy that inclined towards a transgression of legibility, Shirai was committed to upholding the link between the literal meaning and the symbolism embedded in its form as it evolved through its history. He generally followed the conventional method of learning through the rinsho exercise of copying from past masters such as Yan Zhenqing or Wang Xizhi with the intention of remaining

[94]Mizuhara is said to have commented on such convention- breaking mannerisms in a small photocopied pamphlet, which is quoted in Kawazoe, *Sono Sekai*, 336, and also mentioned in Arata Isozaki, "Seisoku to shite no kenchiku," in *Kaishōkan* 100.

objective and not falling into the trap of becoming a self-righteous artist. Shirai says, "it is problematic to express individuality if the individuality is a meagre one. I often talk to young people about reliving history. I think it is important to become humble before history and to bring oneself back to this state in critical self-reflection before one can say 'my individuality' or 'my creation'."[95] This abiding orientation towards custom and historical precedent, which had the effect of tempering an impulse towards rule-breaking invention, renders Shirai's calligraphy commensurable with canonical models even when it deviates from the norm, ensuring a degree of recognizability and intelligibility to learned or inquisitive viewers.

Shirai resolutely defended calligraphy's original function as a linguistic sign and used the medium to express his own personal interests, which, much like the Latin dicta that decorated his buildings, were often drawn from religious and philosophical thoughts. Some of his works suggestively point to a specialized, perhaps esoteric cultural reference and demand that the reader be familiar with it in order to activate their curiosity. One example is the calligraphy "Sōran," (喪乱) which is taken from the collection of fragmentary texts written by Wang Xizhi.[96] Others, like 鵞肝 (goose liver or foie gras), are clearly Shirai's inventions, humorously and unexpectedly juxtaposing characters and begging the viewer to question their pronunciation or meaning.

[95]Seiichi Shirai and Shizuka Shirakawa, "Sho to ji" 書と字, *Chūōkōron* 86, no.1 (1971): 267.
[96]Mizuhara also noted this source in "Sensei no sho," in *Koshikyo shojō 2*, 86.

Kohakuan, Nikkō, and the Jōmon–Yayoi Dichotomy

As forms of legible text, Shirai's calligraphy and Latin inscriptions often interact ironically with the physical, spatial, programmatic, or historical context, offering commentaries on and even sometimes contradicting what this context communicates non-verbally. In an example which layers the literal with the allusive, a carefully staged photograph of Shirai's 1970 residence "Kohakuan" captures the famously dark atmosphere of the interior space in its depiction of the tokonoma-like entrance hall with three pieces of minimal decoration: a small ancient stone head resting on a cantilevered support, a wiry figurative object standing on the ground, and Shirai's own calligraphic rendition of the word "Nikkō" (日光), which can either mean "sunlight" or refer to the ancient city in Tochigi north of Tokyo (fig. 34). In recalling his visit there, the architect Takefumi Aida describes a multi-sensory experience in which the darkness of the foyer activates the non-visual senses, especially the olfactory, as the eyes adjust to the low luminosity, with an awareness of "being pulled into a space that is fundamentally sensual in nature."[97] The composition of the objects and the balance of their various qualities of flatness, weight, compressiveness, and tensility project an air of serenity that softens the discord between the literal meaning of the text and the physical reality of the room, so that this clash of messages becomes absorbed into the architectural experience as a point of momentary disorientation and disruption of one's engagement with the space.

[97]Takafumi Aida, "From the Awe-inspiring the World of Sensuality" *The Japan Architect: (international edition)*, 50, no.2 (Feb. 1975): 67

Construing the word Nikkō as a city name yields another layer of dissonance through its association with the Tōshōgū shrine dedicated to the Shōgun Tokugawa Ieyasu, for which the city is primarily known. Highly embellished with rich colours and intricate carvings, the shrine was assessed negatively by the architect Bruno Taut, who singled it out in his discussions of Japanese architecture as an exemplar of kitsch, a "barbaric overloaded Baroque" diametrically opposed to the aristocratic Katsura Detached Palace, which he extolled as being "absolutely modern" (fig. 35)[98] The contrast between the minimalist stillness of the photograph and Tōshōgū's ostentatious display of power and loud extravagant style cannot be starker and puts into relief Shirai's views on Jōmon aesthetics and their points of divergence from Okamoto's original conception of the Jōmon-Yayoi dichotomy, into which Tōshōgū can be argued to fit, however problematically, as an expression of Jōmon-like extroversion.

When Okamoto proposed in his 1952 essay that Jōmon pottery should be viewed not merely as archeological artifacts but also as aesthetic objects from which artists could draw inspiration, he had in mind a version of the primitivism he saw flourishing during his sojourn in Europe in the 1930s that would help fuel the preservation and continuation of Japanese tradition through a renewed creative energy.[99] The astute choice of Jōmon as a vehicle for this cultural revitalization replaced the political matrix of Taut's shogunate-aristocrat dichotomy

[98]Taut, who stayed in Japan from 1933 to 1936 after fleeing from Nazi Germany, famously wrote that "Japan's architectural arts could not rise higher than Katsura, nor sink lower than Nikko." See Taut, *Fundamentals of Japanese Architecture*, 20.

[99]Tarō Okamoto, 'Jōmon doki ron."

based on ruling class rivalry with a focus on contemporary democratic struggles expressed in the antagonism between an exclusive and overrefined high culture (Yayoi) and more dynamically spatial and rawly energetic low culture (Jōmon), all the while sidestepping the taboo surrounding anything suggestive of militaristic nationalism. With the issue of tradition having been taken up with a particular sense of urgency among postwar modernist architects such as Uzō Nishiyama and Kenzō Tange and given a public stage through its vigorous promotion by Noboru Kawazoe under his editorship at the journal Shinkenchiku in a period of expanding readership locally and abroad, Shirai entered the debate with a short manifesto-like article published in the August 1956 issue of the journal.[100] Using the Egawa warrior residence as an exemplar, Shirai suggested what Okamoto's idea of the Jōmon in visual art might mean in architectural terms while at the same time shifting its locus away from the archeological and instead regarding it very abstractly within a dialectic of civilizational development as a Dionysian-like source of creative energy that cannot be codified into a single set of repeatable forms. Shirai speculated that the Egawa residence might have once belonged to a provincial family clan of *gōzoku* or a *nobushi* family of wandering samurai and commends it as being completely free of the kind of "aesthetic fictions" that are designed to impress the viewer and that are typically seen as worthy of official heritage designation. This association with an autonomous warrior class operating outside of the main centres of power succeeded in projecting a certain masculine cultural ethos that Shirai wished to resurrect while maintaining a distance,

[100]Shirai, *Jōmon teki narumono*, 4.

like Okamoto's primitivism, from the taboo of institutionalized violence, an ethos whose spirituality and moral rectitude are grounded in a simplicity and generosity unspoiled by pretension and in an idea of strength that contains an element of the wild and primitive but without the connotations of barbarism. In this respect, Shirai sees himself as a promoter of a tradition that encompasses the practices of a wide spectrum of historical figures ranging from the calligrapher Kūkai and the Buddhist monk Jishū to the painter Sesshū and the tea master Rikyū, all of whom shared a radical inventiveness that sought to disrupt the conventionality of inherited types, models, or ideas.

Shirai's adoption of the term Jōmon and its connotative force as an expression of dynamism and strength was meant, not unlike Okamoto's primitivism, to signal a functional approach towards the issue of engagement with past cultural practices, as a protest against prevailing stereotypes in which the Japanese came to be "nominalized" through the perfunctory visual expression of qualities associated with Yayoi such as delicacy and sensitivity.[101] However, while both Shirai and Okamoto strongly objected to a simple mimetic referencing of Japanese tradition that would threaten to reduce the reception of artwork to an unreflective symbolic identification, the photograph of the Kohakuan residence seems to have been calculated to convey the kind of samurai ethic that Shirai describes through

[101]The word "nominalized" is used in the original article "Jōmon teki naru mono," *Shinkenchiku* (August 1956): 4-8. In the version that appeared in the collection of essays *Musō* 無窓, it is replaced by the expression *teikeika* 定型化 meaning standardization or stereotype. This reliance on a foreign word whose meaning is not fully explained is a typical example of the poetic liberty that Shirai takes in his use of language. See Seiichi Shirai, "Jōmon teki narumono: egawa shi kyū-nirayamakan ni tsuite" in *Musō* (Tokyo: Shōbun sha, 2010), 107-112.

a formal evocation of an early *shoin* study room from the Muromachi era, with the archaic appearance of the objects and the bold strokes and severe composition of the calligraphy together exuding a sense of discipline. This conception of the Jōmon in terms of a warrior class temperament that does not foreclose on the possibility of formal resemblance to local historical models runs counter to that of Okamoto, whose cultural disconnect Shirai seems to be targeting when he lamented in his 1958 essay that "'Jōmon-like things' that are the latent power of the ethnic people [of Japan] have faltered, and the imported abstract or bizarre objects are energized to 'overcome the tradition'."[102] The appearance of recognizable patterns as a byproduct of the kind of dialectic at work in Kohakuan between process and form, which Shirai concedes as an inevitability but at the same time subversively exploits in a productive way, ultimately exposes the slipperiness of the Jōmon-Yayoi rhetoric in its entanglement with formal concerns and its hitching by various architects and critics to dichotomies such as primitiveness versus refinement, low culture versus high culture, democracy versus authoritarianism, and masculine versus feminine. The *shoin* imagery of the Kohakuan foyer, for example, contains its own inversion within the coordinates of its orthogonal composition: the rusticity of the objects and the discipline and strength expressed by the thick planed pillar have been staged in the spirit of the refined and sophisticated theatre of the *sukiya* style tea house, which developed within the merchant class in reaction to the *shoin* typology, with which it shares the abstract organizational

[102]Seiichi Shirai, "Dentō no atarashii kiken: wareware no kokuritsu gekijō kensetsu" 伝統の新しい危険: われわれの国立劇場建設 in *Muso* 無窓 (Tokyo: Shōbunsha, 2010), 56.

structure of the *tokonoma*, and was designed to stimulate aesthetic pleasure and express personal taste in the arrangement of found objects, epitomizing as such the Yayoi in the eyes of Tange and others. While Shirai expressly rejected the idea of opening his private residence to public display, the Kohakuan foyer was clearly intended, through its formal and material syntheses, the provocative associations of its calligraphic text, and its careful photographic curation, to convey an artistic statement unconstrained by the parameters of the narrative that developed out of the Shinkenchiku debates, and in particular out of the categorial framework of Shirai's own 1956 essay. In this sense Kohakuan can be seen as an architectural manifestation of the kind of methodology with which he approached the book as an artistic medium.

Kanji, Spiritualization, and Artistic Training

While the issue of legibility was an essential component in Shirai's calligraphic and architectural use of text, his choice to use exclusively kanji in calligraphy was rooted in an animistic belief that this writing system possessed a special capacity to be "spiritualized" through an inexhaustible formal mutability. For him kanji are tied at their very basic level to the innermost corporal and day-to-day aspects of human life, as something that should be "corporally felt from within oneself" and not to be "explained" if one were seeking to understand their "life" (命, inochi).[103] He often professed his veneration for kanji, which he described as "including and comprising the world" through their inherent iconic and ideogram-

[103]Shirai and Shirakawa, "Sho to ji", 259.

matic qualities, and was dismissive of the *kana* scripts, which he referred to as being shallow.[104] In a 1971 conversation with the Chinese scholar Shirakawa Shizuka, Shirai states,

> One says that people without letters and stateless people have something in common. I think that kanji is something that can be spiritualized, which also means that they carry unlimited formal possibilities. This makes them distinct from other letters and characters, and I think the movement to abolish kanji emerges from a lack of awareness of it. Also isn't Shodō [or calligraphy], which has recently become fashionable, forgetting the fact that characters are spiritualized and possess an infinite capacity for formal invention? This is such a degeneracy. Of course, the other degeneration must derive from the fact that they [the abolitionists], following Western rational thinking, only think of characters as socially useful signs. [105]

The idea of kanji as spiritual entities was thus linked to the issue of national identity and a kind of creative potential that cannot be reduced to rationality. That the characters acquire an independent existence divorced from their etymological source seems to both fulfill and negate Shirai's effort to seize on what he sees as the spiritual nature of kanji, a dialectical maneuver which resonates not only with his typographical manipulations of Roman letters but also with his architectural practice as a whole and which ultimately reveals the fundamental illogic of his program.

[104]Shirai and Shirakawa, "Sho to ji", 261. There are two kinds of *kana*. *Hiragana* are derived from the cursive form of kanji and generally lack the sharp angles and straight lines that typically define the compositional frame of a kanji, whereas *katakana* developed from parts of kanji and have kept little semantic content. In these phonetic writing systems there is a more tenuous connection between symbolic content and form. See the interview with Kurita, "Gendai kenchiku to sei narumono," in *Shirai Seiichi kenchiku o kataru*, 264.

[105]Shirai and Shirakawa, "Sho to Ji" 263

The corporal connection to everyday life that Shirai recognized as underlying the spiritual potential of kanji was put into practice through long and intense sessions which enabled him, through a paradoxical synthesis of conscious directive and trance-like surrender reminiscent of André Breton's automatism, to capitalize on the tension between an imperative to preserve traditional form and a will to aesthetic experimentation through the transfer of architectural sensibility.[106] This work ethic, which Shirai refers to as "gyo," a concept promulgated by the thirteen-century Buddhist priest Dōgen, who came to be Shirai's important philosophical reference point in his later years, also played a crucial role as a mechanism for conditioning the intellectual and conscious act of aesthetic judgment through which individual pieces were selected as artistic statements to be publicized in exhibitions and books. Some insight into the origins of Shirai's aesthetic sensitivity and sensibility can be gleaned from the extensive year-long exercise in lettering using both Latin alphabet and kanji that Arimitsu, like many of Shirai's interns, was obliged to undertake in accordance with his belief that there is no fundamental difference between architectural design and the art of lettering. On each page of a gridded notebook of A4 size, Arimitsu would accumulate the outlines of twelve renditions of a single kanji from whatever sources that happened to be at hand and that strongly appealed to her personal taste, with the characters laid out in a three-by-four landscape configuration and copied by hand in pencil.[107] The end result was an eclectic assortment extracted from the writings

[106] I argue in the following chapter that the connection to the Surrealist movement is not coincidental.

[107] One of Arimitsu's sources was *Shodo geijutsu*, a widely available twenty-four volume com-

of Chinese calligraphers such as Wang Xizhi and Yan Zhenqing and Japanese calligraphers such as Kūkai and the emperor Saga which on a typical page featured examples of all of the three basic calligraphy styles of Kaisho (block script), gyōsho (semi-cursive script), and sōsho (cursive script). A few of the character outlines were drawn by Shirai himself and exhibit the same kind of erect posture and thick lines he favoured in the actual act of doing calligraphy.[108]

Latin phrases were studied similarly, but with an additional eye towards spacing and layout, with subtly different versions executed in a page sequence so as to facilitate their comparison. The phrase "Anima et persona," for example, was rendered in ten different ways over a span of several days, mostly in gently serifed Roman capitals but with slight variations in the size, spacing, and overall form of the letters and in the thickness of the strokes and serif styles that together produce gestalts with completely different impressions. In the specimen marked June 21, Arimitsu adjusted the spacing according to Shirai's suggestions two days earlier, modified the serif on the letters *M* and *N*, and ever slightly slimmed down the strokes. The result was a more egalitarian treatment of the letters as singletons, uniformly distributed and discretely separated. In the next day's iteration, which was the one that was ultimately selected for the Kaishōkan book, the thick strokes were made even thicker with an entasis-like convex curvature, an operation which is more noticeable in the notebook prototype than in the debossed implementation on the book cover, especially in the case of the letters *I* and *E*.

pendium on Chinese and Japanese calligraphy published by Chūōkōron in the early 1970s.

[108] In a conversation of the author with Arimitsu at Matsue, Tottori, June 23, 2017.

This convex distension was reversed in the subsequent version, with the stroke curvature now having become subtly concave and the letters made smaller and more slender, leading to a more delicate appearance. It is through the iterative nature of these technical exercises, which provide a methodical framework in which a sensitivity to subtle differences of form can be honed and the whole can be controlled from the parts, that the artist is able to acquire their agency as a creator, exploring and refining their individual taste in concrete terms and cultivating a unique signature through highly directed means. This methodological attitude can be read as an ironic qualification of Kant's idea of the artistic "genius" as an empty vessel through which nature magically manifests itself as a rule-giving force that cannot be consciously replicated, countering this with a system of "unnatural" selection guided by a technician with the skill and knowledge to be able to control contingencies and exploit them for aesthetic purposes.[109]

The two-stage process through which Shirai carried out his calligraphic work, beginning with intensive and iterative raw production that embraces the accidental and the unconscious but is also finely attuned to the expressive potency of nominally small changes in detail, and then passing to a more purely reflective process of selection and editing that subjects the collected products to acute aesthetic judgment, shows itself to be naturally conditioned by the medium, however much this mode of engagement may diverge in its conception from traditional practices. When used as an element in book design, Shirai typically submit-

[109]See section 46. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987) 174.

ted the calligraphy to an additional editing process consisting of minute adjustments and corrections, which had the effect of transforming the indexical trace of the maker's mind and body into a carefully controlled graphic design, at a certain remove from the immediacy of the original act. This division into production and curation, which reframes the corporal contribution in a reflexive way as a kind of ready-made, provides a way to transcend the artistic limitations of simple performance, however well rehearsed, not unlike the way the pianist Glenn Gould obsessively manipulated his recordings down to the smallest detail using tape-slicing technology or the way the artists Lee Friedlander and Ed Ruscha subjects a prodigious number of snapshots taken with a handheld camera to a second phase of selection, thematization, and sequencing through which the artistic object is realized in its targeted medium, the book. This dialectical adaptation of traditional calligraphy, which trades conventional apprenticeship with an autonomous "amateur" exploration of the medium that looks reverentially to historical models as a basis for understanding the physical production of form but ultimately prioritizes a reflexive phase of evaluation and selection for the purpose of making an artistic statement, is thus very much in line with a certain modernist ethos that is primed by its very nature for the aesthetic exploitation of mechanical efficiencies made possible by new technologies.

Perception, Movement, and Signification

One way to theorize the semiotic component of Shirai's treatment of text is through his complex investment in each of the categories of icon, index, and symbol which C.S. Peirce identified as the three basic modes in which signs and signification function and which Shirai consistently subverts in a game of contradiction and juxtaposition. The Latin inscription "Anima et persona" of the Kaishōkan book perverts the indexical notion of existential connection by transmitting the idea of mechanical precision and reproducibility while being an entirely bespoke effort to imbue spirit in individual characters through painstaking handcraft. In an almost opposite direction, the indexical expression of immediacy and spontaneity in Shirai's calligraphy is undercut by the controlled evolutionary selection that governs his aesthetic process. While Shirai's texts are invariably presented as legible linguistic signs, that is, as Peircean symbols which mediate meaning through convention, his Latin inscriptions and calligraphy are often personal statements whose true referents are difficult to access and thus effectively function as emblems whose symbolic and ornamental significance ends up overshadowing the lexical. The inherent iconic qualities in kanji, rooted in the idea of communication through resemblance and admired by Shirai as witnesses to civilizational development, were completely transmuted in his reimagining of characters as autonomous architectural inventions.

This ethic of inversion does not merely stop at the sabotaging of Peircean categories but also extends beyond the semiotic level to the broader theatre of per-

ception and bodily experience, in which text becomes but one of many available architectural tools, as we saw in the effects of scale reversal and the distortion of the picturesque in the NOA building. In the following chapter, I will undertake a wider exploration of Shirai's strategy of inversion in this general architectural context, including a tracing of some of its genealogy and an investigation of the ways in which it serves to activate meaning through the interplay of symbolic representation, spatial dynamics, and the physical engagement of the subject.

3. RADICAL INVERSIONS

According to theorist and historian Neil Levine, modern architecture can be understood at its root in terms of a dialectical confrontation between representation and reality. Levine traces the historical origins of this problematic to the eighteenth-century landscape garden of Vanbrugh and Hawksmoor at Castle Howard, whose network of geographically dispersed pavilions supplanted the Renaissance-Baroque conception of representation based on rhetorical convention with a more spatially and temporally dynamic conception of architectural narrative admitting a wider but less determinate set of associations and references that demanded the active participation of the beholder in the construction of meaning. Levine writes,

> Exchanging the exclusive and closed system of representation of the classical orders that gave hierarchical distinction to the various parts of the house for the more open, more varied, more evocative, but also more elusive set of references embodied in the different types of garden outbuildings, Vanbrugh and Hawksmoor recalibrated the subject-object mechanism in architectural expression to suit the demands of an unconventional narrative of the self. The passive registration of characterological distinctions by the discerning eye of an ideal, neutral observer was replaced by an active engagement of the imaginative faculties of the beholder in interpreting and analyzing the specific meanings of the structures in their actual landscape setting. No longer the object but now the very subject of the architectural drama of the landscape garden, the participant at Castle Howard controls and determines the sequence and pace at which the different buildings are encountered and ultimately attributes meanings to them in a process where seeing itself necessarily becomes a creative act. The modern

> architectural subject thus emerges in a double sense: as the reflexive expression of the building and as the beholder as an active agent in its determination.[1]

Castle Howard announces the fundamental conflict that has come to define the modern conundrum, between the traditional conception of architecture as standing in for other ideas and the physical reality of the built object understood more purely in terms of its materiality, form, and function. From this discursive horizon emerges the modern subject, which is empowered to imaginatively determine meaning through its own activity as an embodied being but is at the same time constrained by the experiential parameters of space and form and the cultural and symbolic codes that these inevitably harbour.

At the same time a superficially similar but fundamentally divergent conception of the picturesque landscape garden as a rigidly programmed experience came to predominate in other examples such as Stowe and Stourhead, whose legacy was a nineteen-century eclecticism in which style became conventionalized into a matter of selection and application. It was only with the advent of twentieth-century modernism that the impact of the kind of forces put into play at Castle Howard came to be fully felt, in particular through the introduction of new types of symbolic investment, such as the abstraction of natural forms in Frank Lloyd Wright's "organic architecture" and the staging of technology in the work of Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier, in conjunction with a radical exploration of bodily experience and the demands of practical, programmatic, and

[1]Neil Levine, "Castle Howard and the Emergence of the Modern Architectural Subject," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 62, no. 3 (Sep. 2003): 347-348.

psychological function. In Japan, the arrival of modernism in the 1920s presented distinct set of challenges as architects grappled with the legacy of a Meiji-era eclecticism that saw the idea of Western architecture as itself a subject of representation while at the same time heralding an ambivalence towards the abandonment of tradition that has continued to resurface in various manifestations, most conspicuously in the Imperial Crown Style of the 1930s and the discourses and projects surrounding the so-called tradition debate of the 1950s and 60s, but also in subtler forms in practices over the last fifty years.

A major player in the postwar tradition debate, Seiichi Shirai came to seize on the challenge of modern subjectivity in a highly singular manner that sought to avoid the blunt expression of tradition through inherited forms but at the same time harkened directly back to the Castle Howard prototype in the use of more ambiguously allusive yet nevertheless evocative cultural markers as part of the engagement of the beholder in a dynamic construction of meaning through such devices as geometry and scale. In Shirai's case, however, the semiotic openness is choreographed not through the kinds of perceptual tricks and bodily movements conditioned by vast distances in an expansive landscape setting but rather through the concentrated imbrication and interference of architectural devices at the scale of a single building, with reality now intruding in a much more forceful way that tends to obstruct the arrival at any stable meaning beyond the raw presence of material, space, and form. Viewing the centrifugal dispersion of the pavilions in the landscape garden at Castle Howard as not only operative but also metaphoric in its role in the shattering of the classical modes of representation,

we can thus understand Shirai's work as effecting a reinversion of this transformation, not for the purpose of reinstating or rearticulating the older paradigm but rather as a radicalization of the lessons of the picturesque. It is this heightened and highly self-conscious dialectic of subjectivity that places Shirai squarely within the compass of the modern, through specific forms of architectural implementation which, as we will see, themselves serve to reflexively critique certain contemporaneous strands of modernism.

The dominant motif in Shirai's work can be identified as a set of strategies which, although operating at very different levels of abstraction, are bound by the idea of upending an expectation based in one's habitual relation to the physical or cultural environment through the irruption of what may be conceived of as its opposite. This technique, which I will refer to as inversion, came to inform all facets of Shirai's practice, from architecture to book design to calligraphy, and encompassed everything from the dichotomous play of physical qualities such as luminosity, tactility, and mass to the convolution of cultural categories such as the sacred and the mundane, modernity and tradition, and even roofs and grids as representations of regionality and universality.[2]

The two distinct but related compulsions that have nourished the development of this general methodological program are a penchant for bricolage and a self-described inborn contrarian attitude. While these basic dispositions are widely recognizable in Shirai's works, tracing back to the fusion of disparate

[2]See the previous chapter "Perception and Movement" for examples of inversion involving text.

styles in the prewar Kankisō residence and the isolated use of simple substitutional forms of inversion in the earlier postwar buildings, in the 1960s they started to be applied in ever more sophisticated combinations to create a kind of picturesque in which various inversions are layered in often disconcerting ways. I will carry out in what follows a detailed reading of Shirai's key buildings in order to clarify the mechanisms through which these architectural maneuvers activate meaning through the interplay of symbolic representation and bodily experience. Of special interest are inversions involving sexuated exhibitions of eroticism and related operations that serve to confuse the distinction between interior and exterior, not only phenomenologically but also at the social and psychological levels of public and private. With meaning firmly anchored to the experience of the individual, the dialectic between interior and exterior and between public and private in Shirai's work can be seen as a critique of the modernist ideal of transparency and continuity and its postwar manifestation in an international style that began to transform Japan in the 1960s. At the same time, this critique is itself framed from a radically modern standpoint through the obsessive use of the elemental material of architecture to confront the questions of tradition, representation, and reality. This intensive disciplinary specificity, along with the integral role of experience and the continuous engagement with historical precedents, echoes the art critic Clement Greenberg's narrative of modernist painting as a teleological process of critical reflection on its very self. However, Shirai's architecture would appear to betray the Greenbergian movement towards purity if one compares it with the triumphant reductionism of the postwar International

Style. My discussion of inversion will help to illuminate these themes and the ways in which they put into question the various reactions to Shirai's work that position it in antithetical relation to the modern.

Assemblage to Inversion

The methodology that came instinctively to Shirai at the very beginning of his career, before the sublimatory mannerisms that came to define his postwar work, was one of assemblage from often disparate sources. This must owe in part to his experiences in Germany, where he went to study philosophy in the 1930s on the advice of the philosopher Yasukazu Fukada, who recommended this path as a worthwhile detour en route to becoming an architect.[3] Little of the details of his activities in Europe are known, but it could only have been a turbulent period of his life, including a love affair with the writer Fumiko Hayashi with whom he met in Paris regularly in 1932, involvement with the leftist weekly newspaper *Berurin Shūhō* for Japanese expatriates in Berlin, and a trip to the Soviet Union with, by some accounts, an intention to defect.[4]

At the most superficial level, Shirai's experience during this period left its trace in the ways in which he insistently incorporated design elements sourced or inspired from abroad. In the Kawamura residence, the first project in which

[3]Shirai went to the University of Heidelberg with the intention of studying with Heinrich Rickert but instead ended up following Karl Jaspers's philosophy lectures and August Grisebach's art history course on Gothic architecture. Kawazoe, "Shirai seiichi ron nōto I," 28.

[4]*Berurin Shūhō* was edited by Tōmin Suzuki. For the most detailed account of Shirai's activity during this period based on two interviews, see Kawazoe, "Shirai seiichi ron nōto I," and "Shirai seiichi ron nōto II."

he had a substantial input, Shirai inaugurated what was to become a lifelong practice of inscribing Latin dicta in and around his buildings, a gesture which he described as a token for the memory of the fascination he felt in seeing this practice in Europe during his youth (fig. 1).[5] In Kankisō, his debut as a solo architect, Shirai broadened his repertoire of foreign design sources with the use of half-timbering, plain stucco, and brick masonry to create a pastiche of European styles within a single facade, all capped off with a Japanese thatched roof.[6] While Shirai's nostalgia towards Germany and Europe in general endured throughout his life and is evidenced in his use of German and English words in sketches, writings, and conversations, the geography of symbolic referencing and allusion in his work eventually expanded as his interests came to encompass Japanese calligraphy, Buddhism, broader East Asia, and the Middle East. In his postwar commercial and institutional work, the gatherer ethos came to command Shirai's entire design practice in increasingly fanatical ways, from the strenuous process of sourcing stone from Korea for the Serizawa Keisuke museum in an effort to juggle aesthetic, symbolic, economic, and practical concerns, to the procurement of unusual hardwoods from a purveyor with whom he nurtured a close relation, to the personal outfitting of the interiors of his buildings with carefully selected and coordinated furniture and artwork imported from Europe and America.[7]

[5]See the essay "Perception and movement" for a description of the inscription at Kawamura residence.

[6]Kankisō is the first building for which Shirai was solely responsible as designer. These kinds of facade treatments resurface later in buildings like Zenshōji temple and Santa Chiara building at Ibaraki Christian University.

[7]It is interesting to compare Shirai's attitude towards the interior with that of Adolf Loos with respect to their appreciation for objets trouvés, but also at the same time with that of Frank Lloyd

Shirai's compositional technique of assemblage has been noted by many historians and critics as an essential characteristic of his work and as being resonant with various traditional Japanese cultural practices such as flower arrangement, renga poetry, and Sukiya architecture.[8] In a discussion of Shirai's Shinwa bank headquarters, the architect Arata Isozaki describes this as a uniquely Japanese method which had developed through the middle ages and culminated in the practice of the tea master Rikyū, and which stands diametrically opposed to what he views as a Western approach that conceives of architecture in terms of its style.[9] While this observation seems to position Shirai's work as an embodiment of a native cultural ethos and laid the basis for Isozaki's understanding of Shirai's work as a set of mannerist gestures that articulate an essentially inscrutable personal taste, this abstract categorical discussion tends to obscure what might be called the metric aspects of Shirai's work, the elaborate mise-en-scène of geometry, material, and scale and its effects on the embodied subject.

What plays the crucial role in making this theatre come alive for the beholder in motion is the spatial distribution of architectural moments that create symbolic allusions through both their physical and iconic qualities. While in some cases Shirai sets up these moments of engagement to occur discretely at some distance of separation from each other, such as in the strategic positioning of the various

Wright in view of Shirai's Gesamtkunstwerk-like control over the smallest details and his protests over the desecration of his buildings by their owners. For a detailed description of the way Shirai procured lumber and stones for the Serizawa Keisuke museum, see the interview with Shirai in En'ya, *Sekisuikan: kenchiku o utau*, 13-29.

[8]David Stewart, "Poems and Sword," in *Shin Takamatsu*, 75-76.

[9]Arata Isozaki, "Tōketsushita jikanno sanakani," in *Kūkan e: kongen eto sokōsuru shikō* (Tokyo: Kajima shuppankai, 1997), 400.

pieces of signage decorating the exterior of NOA building (1974) in Tokyo, in many other instances they are placed in close proximity so as to amplify the dissonance between them, as in the embossed and debossed bank and branch names on the exterior wall of Shinwa bank's Ōhato branch.[10] Whereas constellations of the former looser kind can be understood more or less atomically through the isolated local effects of their singletons, the latter require a much more non-trivial parsing to fully appreciate the complexity with which they have been woven together. The structure of such a web in Shirai's work often reveals itself to be a system of interlocking dialectical pairs, each bound together by a relation of inversion. In this way the concept of inversion, not unlike the individual elements of a group in mathematics and the local symmetries they separately implement, becomes an elemental building block in an effort to intellectually diagram Shirai's architectural mise-en-scene.

Two Types of Visuality

Perhaps the simplest kind of dialectical coupling at play in Shirai's work is a substitutional one in which a physical or functional quality that conforms to the expectations of entrenched cultural convention is replaced with its opposite, with the notion of opposite being construed in either a phenomenological or culturally constructed way depending on the situation. In many early projects such as the Tsukushi residence (1952) and Matsuida town hall (1956), the contin-

[10]See the sections "Dynamics" and "NOA and the Picturesque" in the previous chapter "Perception and Movement" for a discussion on the NOA building and the Ōhato branch of the Shinwa bank.

uous panel ceiling of the Japanese-style room has been exchanged for a tiling by goza mats that mimic tatami mattresses in their texture, fringing, and collective configuration, making the ceiling appear like the floor of a traditional Japanese living space (fig. 36). This apparently straightforward cost-saving measure resonates with deeper cultural significance in its rehearsal of the photographs of traditional Japanese interiors that were mistakenly published upside down in European journals and books in the 1920s. As Sutemi Horiguchi noted, these inverted images accorded more with the logic of a Western eye that automatically expects to see a dark floor and light ceiling.[11] Whether or not Shirai was aware of these photographic precedents, this visual maneuver anticipated the dualistic conception of Japan and the West as an antithetical pair that came to figure as a recurring motif in his postwar writings and buildings and that served as an ironically reflexive basis for creating what he envisioned as a genuine Japanese architecture through a matrix of inversions involving such conceptual terms as roofs and grids, rationality and irrationality, and mechanization and handicraft.

The tea house "rōkanseki," erected inside the sake warehouse Takaku Shuzō at Yuzawa, Akita, in 1953 for the purpose of receiving a liquor tax auditor, is another early example that exhibits a simple form of inversion, this time grounded in a different kind of perception. Traditionally a tea house would be found in a temple complex or residential property and built either as a freestanding outbuilding or an attached structure with its own separate access at the end of an

[11]This was noted by Ken Tadashi Ōshima, *International Architecture in Interwar Japan: Constructing Kokusai Kenchiku* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), 147.

exterior promenade. In this case, however, it has been inserted as an independent object into the highly unusual setting of an warehouse (dozō) interior as a rectangular box lacking the characteristic pitched roof, positioned against a wall on the second floor far from the entrance as the terminus of a this time indoor promenade, which starts from the outer workshop space from which one enters the building and proceeds through a massive plaster door with thick multiply stepped jambs (kakego nuri, 掛子塗り) into the main volume, where one finds to the side a steep wooden ladder leading up in semidarkness to the tea house (fig. 37, fig. 38). The one-room interior of the "house" is fitted with florescent ceiling lights, whose harsh illumination amidst the enveloping darkness of the warehouse produces a kind of spectral glow through the shoji screen window, whose unusual elongation as a kind of fenêtre-en-longeur is subtly evocative of 1920s European modernism. As an enclosure within the much larger envelope of the warehouse, the tea room has an air of calmness and serenity, and although its layout is not especially functional for the actual purpose of serving tea the room is used by its current owner as a place of contemplation.[12] The indoor promenade within the dozō thus reverses the light-to-dark sequence of the customary ritual in which the mini-picturesque of the outdoor *roji* passageway primes the visitor for the dramatic effect of compression into a small dark interior.

The two modes of perception that condition the substitutional inversions in these two early examples are fundamentally different in nature, one involving the differential faculty of being able to identify objects within a visual field and

[12]In conversation with Shōkichi Takaku, May, 2015.

the other the integrative faculty of being able to sense differences in ambient luminosity. Although both have to do with sight, the first hinges on an extensional understanding of objects as collections of physical attributes which can be coded, interpreted, and disseminated through visual media, while the second is more inextricably tied to the immersive nature of one's embodied experience in a given environment. The sequence from dark to light in the tea house promenade may of course be intellectually schematized and interpreted through cultural associations, but the sensation itself is more private and qualitative, resistant to objectification and difficult to capture through photographic representation or in artistic expression. These two complementary categories that help to frame one's immediate experience of architectural space, one cognitively more complex and the other more affective, would come to form the basis in later works for more and more sophisticated and layered forms of inversion that aimed to deepen the engagement of the moving subject through the interweaving of the spatial and the temporal.

Juxtapositional Inversion

If the transpositions effected by the *goza* mat and tea house lighting appear to be contingent by-products of the context and program, they point ahead to a strategy that begins to be implemented in increasingly systematic ways in the 1960s through a more complex use of the architectural language of light, colour, form, and material that evolves away from the simple logic of substitution and some-

times even tries to escape the culturally associational altogether in the search for a priori form. One seminal project which helped to set this development in motion is the Temple Atomic Catastrophes memorial, an unbuilt proposal from 1954 that served as a kind of ur-form for the commercial and institutional buildings that were realized over the subsequent decade and a half (fig. 7). Emblematic of this phase of Shirai's career are the Ōhato bank branch, whose dialectical play of colonnade and monumental mass evoke in an ironic way the dichotomy between column architecture and wall architecture that Rudolf Wittkower observed in Alberti's conception of classical architecture, and the Shinwa Bank headquarters in Sasebo, whose double massing, designed and built in two separate stages, showcases opposing sets of architectural qualities (fig. 26, 39).[13]

In the northern initial block of the Sasebo project, which most closely resembles the main hall of the Temple of Atomic Catastrophes among Shirai's realized works, an angular volume faced with smooth light-coloured Iranian travertine projects outward from the second and third stories of a four-story elliptical cylinder core clad with polished black Uruguayan granite, while in the second southern phase a three-story high billowed box sheathed in smooth dark bronze sits on a one-story base of rugged light grey faux-stone that flares outward like a cavetto molding. The frontal face of the northern floating volume is moreover cleaved by a deep vertical slit that conceals a tall narrow window, while the metal skin of the southern structure has been peeled back across the middle third of its frontal

[13]See the section "Book Design and the Picturesque" in the previous chapter "Perception, Movement and Signification" for another discussion.

width to accommodate a generous rectangle of fenestration that, in anthropomorphically paradoxical contrast to the gash of its twin, discharges an impressive view the cavernous interior space. The cladding of the two main volumes is applied in starkly contrasting tiling patterns, both of which allude to masonry construction while simultaneously perverting this association through the structural illogic of their essentially continuous vertical joints.[14] In the bronze tiling on the taller southern side, the running bond of conventional brick laying has been rotated ninety degrees so as to generate a vertically dynamic motif, while the travertine of the adjacent volume, configured horizontally in much larger rectangular panels, stages a subtle and deceptive play of visual interference between the two different scales at which the coursing of the stone can be read. When read as individual panels, the travertine cladding defines a grid whose otherwise uniform visual cadence has been slightly perturbed by the subtle offsetting of the vertical edges in groups of two.[15] The panels, at least those of the inner six horizontal layers, can also be read at a coarser scale in rectangular two-by-two units, with the corners of four panels exactly meeting at a central point and the grouping of the units emphasized by the beveling of the vertical outer edges and the

[14]This has been commented upon by others, such as Atsushi Ōkawa 大川厚志, "Shinwa ginkō honten to fukuoka sōgo ginkō ni okeru sekkei shuhōno ruijisei: manierisumu kara mita nihon ni okeru posuto modan kenchiku no hajimari" 親和銀行本店と福岡相互銀行本店における設計手法の類似性：マニエリスムから見た日本におけるポスト・モダン建築の始まり" [Similarities in the design methods of the Shinwa Bank headquarters and the Fukuoka Sōgo Bank: the beginning of postmodern architecture in Japan viewed from the point of view of Mannerism], 23-3, accessed April 15, 2019, `http://www.hues.kyushu-u.ac.jp/education/student/pdf/2011/2HE10061N.pdf`.

[15]This effect was faithfully replicated when the stone veneer had to be replaced with steel panels due to water damage.

shadow lines this produces. These larger units together with the half-height top and bottom layers create a running bond in which each of the beveled vertical edges stacks, slightly shifted, on top of the fainter non-beveled central vertical seam of the unit below, thereby projecting a sense of structural soundness that is lacking in the grid defined by individual panels. According to the original elevations, Shirai seems to have intended to contradict this interlocking two-by-two running bond pattern in turn by thickening the three horizontal joints running across the centres of the larger units so as to disrupt the vertical cohesion of these units through a horizontal banding of the facade. In the executed work, however, this effect hovered on the cusp of imperceptibility, ultimately muting the success of the architect's scheme to establish a system of mutually negating geometric orders.

Further complicating the perception of the cladding patterns is the fact that the twin buildings face directly onto a busy arcade whose two-story high roof, constructed in 1966 before the completion of the first phase of Shirai's project, severely truncates the frontal view. As architecture historian Takashi Hasegawa described it, "in order to capture the entire expression of this superb architecture in a single mental image, one must establish a fictitious point of view with the help of a certain sort of imagination in conjunction with elevations that have been drawn with great detail."[16] This obstruction, which explains the fact that photographic documentation of the buildings invariably presents a side view or is focused on details, meant that the various inversions of colour, texture, and

[16]Hasegawa,"Seishun to enjuku" in *Shirai Seiichi no Kenchiku*, 176.

form would also not have been obvious to an observer on the ground at the time of the completion of the two buildings.[17] By withholding the full elevation and requiring any engagement with the buildings to be a primarily material one at close proximity, the arcade conspires to create an impression of the complex less as a systematically conceived couple than as a simple bricolage of contrasting qualities.

This seems to accord with the verdict of the anonymous editor at the journal *The Japan Architect*, who described the buildings as having no "unifying principle." Struggling to understand Shirai's position in modern Japanese architecture, this editor ruminates,

> Sei'ichi Shirai has always been something of a mystery not only in that he avoids the various modernisms, but also in that he categorically denies some of the methods of Modern Architecture: the curtain wall, pilotis, and core plan have no connection with his work. Consequently, the contemporary architecture world, smeared from top to bottom with modernism, has found no way to evaluate him. Sometimes, when he reflects the changing tide of the architectural scene, he is regarded as the scion of the Japanese popular tradition, as the bearer of the banner of architecture for the people. To make him acceptable perhaps such a designation was essential, but the truth is that throughout the postwar decades, remaining outside the dominant stream, Shirai has followed his own emotions in his groping search for an architecture that is eccentric but truly original. Consequently, in order for his architecture to be understood as it is, modern styles had to bog down, and the architects had to awaken from the enthusiasm they had previously felt for the dicta of the first half of the century. The

[17] The elevation of the buildings were drawn, not photographed, in the company's book of its history *Shinwa ginkō 30 nen* 親和銀行３０年 [Thirty years of Shinwa Bank] (Sasebo: Shinwa Ginkō, 1972), 100.

> shock delivered to Japanese architects by Shirai's first-phase construction of the Shinwa Bank (completed last year) clearly tells the extent to which attitudes have changed. In fact, Shirai's being awarded the prestigious Architects Association prize for that building is symbolic of current trends.
>
> Although this second-phase section of the bank is supposed to form a totality with its earlier half, the two are in completely different styles.
>
> For example, the gentle bronze wall and large window of the new section contrast sharply with the hard, geometrical feeling of the last year's marble octagon pierced by a black granite oval shaft. No uniting principle can be found between the two.
>
> This, however, is the key to Shirai's approach to plastic form. He is never one to seek a unified total image. Instead, he pours great energy into each part and strives to instill his principles in them. For instance, though the four-story-high banking hall seems unrelated to the other rooms in the section, its blue walls, green marble ribbing, oval skylight, and gentle curves all respond naturally. This is space that bows to neither the structural body nor to the demands of materials. [18]

It is not clear whether Shirai was able to take into account the eventual obstruction of view from the shopping street during the course of the first phase, whose planning had begun in the early 1960s and whose construction was completed in 1967.[19] The visual and physical interference of the arcade would have been an established fact, however, during the planning of the second building, whose staging of inversion in relation to the first was a deliberate strategy that aimed

[18] "The Main Office of the Shinwa Bank: Second Phase," *The Japan Architect* 156 (September 1969): 41

[19] According to the art critic and acquaintance of Shirai Ichirō Hariu, Shirai was not at all bothered by the presence of the arcade but did say that he wished that the store owners would eventually come to treasure his architecture and voluntarily think of removing the overhead structure. Ichirō Hariu 針生一郎, "Shirai Seiichi ron: kannen no kokkaku to jōnen no shin'en to shinwa ginkō honten o chūshin ni" 白井晟一論観念の骨格と情念の深淵と親和銀行本店を中心に, *Space Design* 56 (July, 1969): 32.

in part to bring cohesion into the complex. Shirai had reckoned that "it would only be permissible to create a building that can be organically integrated into a tight unity even if it has a completely different quality from the first tower."[20] The skew symmetry of the pair was intended to establish a certain principle of conceptual order, and it is precisely this rational methodology that serves to condition the formal and material treatment of the individual parts and the visceral responses they prompt in tandem with the arcade, a response that can be felt independently and even in ignorance of their functional origins, much in analogy with the pseudo random number generator.

While the the order established by the twin buildings' matrix of inversions did not qualify as a uniting principle for the editor of *The Japan Architect*, this view was not shared by all critics and historians. Hasegawa drew the opposite conclusion that there was an overarching rationality at work, while the art critic Ichirō Hariu found that the exterior facade was rich in variety but pierced with a clear sense of composition.[21] It is perhaps not a coincidence that Hasegawa and Hariu each came to write about architecture from a perspective outside of the parameters that had shaped the dominant discourses and practices of the discipline at the time. Hasegawa was an early critic of high modernism in Japan and actively promoted architects like Tōgo Murano who were at odds with it. Hariu, a politically engaged literary and art critic who maintained a personal relationship with Shirai, was even more explicit in his criticism of the architec-

[20]Seiichi Shirai, 'Shinwa ginkō honten" 親和銀行本店. In *Muso* 無窓, 39-41. Tokyo: Shōbun sha, 2010. See also the essay "Perception, Movement, and Signification" for the quote.

[21]Hasegawa, " Seishun to enjuku," 177; Ichirō Hariu, "Shirai seiichi ron," 29.

tural scene surrounding Kenzō Tange, making reference to architects and critics who had dismissed Shirai as a mere idol for the people and lamenting the fact they had become the star players in public architecture, urban development, the Olympics, and the World Expo, while at the same time positioning Shirai at the polar extreme from Tange, whose inflexibly deductive top-down methodology "determines the details according to the overall plan" and does not allow for any complexity or contradiction.[22]

The differences in the kinds of assessments represented on the one hand by the editor of *The Japan Architect* and on the other by Hasegawa and Hariu may be attributed to a divergence in the understanding of the meaning of rationality and how it might be expressed through built form, and more broadly to the categorical contestations over the very idea of modern architecture. Isozaki's commentary on the Shinwa Bank headquarters is instructive in this regard. Isozaki showed sympathetic interest in Shirai's work but as a graduate of Tokyo University and protégé of Tange was steeped in the Western paradigm of high modernism and associated Shirai's methodology with lack of rational thinking. Isozaki writes,

> [In transitioning] from the first to the second phase of the Shinwa Bank headquarters] in the 1960s, Seiichi Shirai says he did not have a comprehensive program that is usually required in designing a building. This is due to the complicated process of having to demolish part of

[22]Hariu, "Shirai Seiichi ron," 30-31. The use of the expression polar extreme (対極) is interesting in its evocation of the Tarō Okamoto's idea of "polarism" (対極主義). Hariu participated in the avant-garde art salon "Yoru no kai," founded by Okamoto together with Kiyoteru Hanada, where Okamoto presented the idea as a topic of discussion. See the later section on polarism.

> the existing building, erect a structure there, and then go on to the next step. If he possessed even a sliver of so-called rationalistic planning philosophy, it would have been possible to systematize the process of projecting ahead across the phases of construction. However, Seiichi Shirai accepted wholeheartedly the condition that would inevitably result in stage-wise fracturedness, and, inverting it to his advantage, constructed the architecture of the first and second phases as discontinuous assemblages of divided fragments. It seems it would be better to think that an opaque fragmented composition was preferred over a transparent systematic expression.

Isozaki's somewhat hasty diagnosis of the source of the fracturedness, a quality which might indeed have been amplified by the multi-stage design and construction process but is by no means unique to this project and in fact persisted throughout Shirai's work, reveals the overwhelming influence of the prevailing ideology of modern architecture in which individual deficiency and variability are to be overcome through advances in technology and industry. What is moreover crucial in Isozaki's equation of rationality with systematization is his expectation that this be transparent in the expression of the architecture itself, bringing us back to the core problematic of modernism's inescapable confrontation with the issue of representation. This insistence on a technologically inspired conception of rationality and its manifest architectural legibility short-circuit the promises accorded to the modern subject as a self-determinative agent in the construction of meaning through experience and forecloses the possibility of recognizing that a different kind of conceptual calculus might be at work. Just as form, function, and scale at Castle Howard dynamically coordinate a kind of system whose coherence can only be fully discovered and understood in an incremen-

tal way through the physical and intellectual engagement of the stroller and not through a priori representational means, the Shinwa Bank headquarters demands the subject's participation in the construction of narrative by reflecting the architect's design process back onto the temporal space of experience, where Shirai's programmatic logic of inversion can only be truly appreciated through the details of its formal and material inflections, serendipitously heightened by the arcade's play of concealment and unconcealment.

Roofing, De-roofing, and Re-roofing

We have so far identified two modes of inversion fundamental to the development of Shirai's architectural imagination in the 1950s and 60s, a substitutional one involving unanticipated reversals of physical, environmental, or programmatic qualities and a juxtapositional one involving the side-by-side display of opposites. A third mode of inversion, negation, also comes into force during this period. Although its applications in individual projects are often more subtle, the principle of negation also serves to frame, at a broader reflexive level within the general evolutionary arc of his work, the changes in Shirai's attitude towards the roof and the column, those two fundamental building components whose functional role and symbolic investment has been a particular site of contention and experimentation in modern architectural theory and practice.

Unlike an exchange of polarities, which in its substitutional or juxtapositional modes is mathematically akin to the dynamical structure of a group, negation

operates through a more primitive Boolean logic of presence and absence, in this case applied, with often trenchant effect, to architectural features implied or expected through physical or cultural context in order to create moments of surprise. For example, the frontal articulations of the NOA building (a towering archway), Zenshōji (a vertical band of fenestration spanning the height of the building), and the Kaishōkan tower (a cavernous cleavage in the facade), in their monumental centredness as markers of passage between interior and exterior, all act to draw in visitors but at the same time end up thwarting their smooth penetration into the building through the denial of a formal frontal entrance door, even of a purely ceremonial nature, forcing a pause and ninety-degree turn in which the mundane of act of crossing the threshold is interrupted and elevated into a heightened architectural encounter.

In the case the roof, the existential modalities of presence and absence become subjected themselves to a dialectical transformation that results in their ultimate dissolution as opposing categories. This process neatly periodizes Shirai's institutional and commercial projects into three different phases, an initial one in which the roof assumes a commanding presence, a second defined by the roof's simple scenographic absence, and finally a third sublative stage in which presence and absence are divested of their ontological and symbolic power and are together wielded as coequal architectural tools whose effects fully integrate with the experience of the building in ways contingent on each individual project.[23] Many

[23]Recall that the analysis excludes Japanese style buildings and smaller residential projects that require a pitched roof as part of their stylistic feature.

buildings of the 1950s are capped by a wide and gently pitched roof which impresses with its frontal symmetry but is at the same time subtly shaped through taperings, roundings, and off-orthogonalities that produce illusions of forced perspective and bestow the structure with an aggrandized sense of authority and charisma. Illustrative of this paradigm are the Akinomiya Village Hall (1951), Matsuida Town Hall (1956), and the Zenshōji temple (1958).

In the 1960s, however, the roof as a positive architectural element suddenly disappears from Shirai's design vocabulary. This second phase has its origins in the unrealized *Temple of Atomic Catastrophes* and is exemplified by the projects commissioned by the Shinwa Bank during this decade, including the Tokyo branch and the first stage of the new Sasebo headquarters, both evidently modeled after the Temple, as well as the Nagasaki branch, which was more likely inspired by Middle Eastern vernacular buildings.[24] The Temple was an architectural manifesto whose centrepiece combined a cylinder and a square box in a spirit somewhat evocative of the works of Boullée, Ledoux, and Lequeu, the end result of a lengthy design process that led Shirai to conviction to do away with historical models and instead search for a purity of form.[25] The 1974 book *Shirai Seiichi no Kenchiku* contains the following short text by Shirai titled *On the Temple of Atomic*

[24]He left some sketches of Islamic architecture that resembles this project. See *Shirai seiichi sukecchi shū*.

[25]Kenjirō Okazaki sees some similarities between the work of Shirai and Lequeu and notes that Shirai's European sojourn in the 1930s coincides with the period in which Emil Kaufmann "rediscovered" Boullée, Ledoux, and Lequeu. He remarks, however, that it is not known whether Shirai was aware of Kaufmann's discovery. See Okazaki, "Gijutsu no jōken, kōhen," 188, 196. Kaufmann's *Three Revolutionary Architects: Boullée, Ledoux, and Lequeu* appeared in 1952, two years before Shirai's proposal for the Temple, and so it is conceivable that this had some influence on Shirai's decision to employ elementary forms in his Hiroshima project.

Catastrophes and dated 1955:

> The *Temple of Atomic Catastrophes* is a proposal from 1954. At first I was after the image of a mournful pavilion standing in the middle of a barren plain. This was probably due to the memory of atrocity, the association with ruins in a wasteland. However, as I ruminated on the design I came to think that in the end there was no other way but to reject the kind of thinking that is based on narrative and to pursue the a priori potential of my own design ability. To free myself from the biases of concept and type was at the time a difficult and big task for me; nevertheless, in order to hope for an eternal symbol of the yearning for coexistence and not a metaphor that preserves the memory of tragedy, I deemed that the purity of a form that has never before appeared in front of people's eyes would be the most important thing above anything else. The pavilion took the form of a cylindrical core about nine meters in diameter which, emerging from a body of water that flows gently to the point of imperceptibility, penetrates from below a square pyramid of side length about twenty-three meters.[26] It

[26]The reference to pyramidal volume here is somewhat misleading. As one can see from the drawings, the two interpenetrative shapes of the main pavilion of the Temple are a cylinder and a square box (the exact terms Shirai uses in another write up of the Temple for the journal *Shinkenchiku*—see Seiichi Shirai, "Genbakudo ni tsuite" 原爆について, *Shinkenchiku* 30 (April 1955): 40)—but with the box slightly distended so as to create truncated pyramidal caps on both the top and bottom. These caps are so shallow, however, that they essentially dissolve into the gestalt of the building's overall form. In an article that appears in the same April 1955 issue of *Shinkenchiku* as Shirai's text, Noboru Kawazoe, writing under the pen name Tomo-o Iwata, uses the word "pyramid" in his description of the original plan, stating "it is a plateau [台形] with trapezoidal shapes on the four sides of its perimeter on top of which a cylinder protrudes out, that is, a truncated pyramid if one disregards the cylindrical part—clearly a form that is derived from Egyptian tombs from before the era of the pyramids," a description that actually seems to better match another project of Shirai's, the Manzū Museum, which was postumously realized in 1994 at the Tokyo Zokei University. See Tomo-o Iwata 岩田知夫, "Genbaku jiai ni kōsuru mono" 原爆時代に抗して, *Shinkenchiku* 30 (April 1955): 44. Kawazoe moreover reinforces this connection to ancient civilizations in the editorial note that introduces the Temple in the same issue of *Shinkenchiku*, tracing the architectural origins of the Temple to the ruins around the Nile and the Euphrates, despite Shirai's statement about his own eventual will to avoid this kind of metaphorical association. See Shirai Seiichi, "Atomic Bomb Catastrophe Temple," *Shinkenchiku* 30 (April 1955): 36, 41. The use of the word "pyramid," in preserving a vestige of connection to the image of a pavilion in a desolate landscape that Shirai initially envisioned for the Temple, almost

> was about pursuing, using the most fundamental and simplest equation, the method of assigning roles to the axial cylinder, beam, and wall in the construction and centripetally tightening these by means of the hoop of a wooden barrel for bathing.[27]

The de-roofing of the 1960s thus may be understood as a corollary to a new impulse towards the use of elementary geometry that was seized upon as a solution to the problem of avoiding the kinds of familiar forms and types that trigger memory through their narrative expressiveness. This in particular had the effect of completely excising the symbolic authority that Shirai had previously invested in the roof, negating the stylistic expectations set by his earlier phase and irrevocably reorienting the trajectory of his practice. As a formal precedent that was meant to be free from anything previously seen, the Temple inevitably raised the question of stylistic replication and was indeed the subject of multiple reincarnations, ultimately becoming ensnared within the dialectical relation of originality and repetition.

Then in the 1970s, as if to escape this dilemma, Shirai reintroduced the idea of roof as a dynamic architectural element in his institutional and commercial works, not in order to reinstitute the old paradigm but rather as a dramatic means

seems to have been calculated to contradict the architect's stated design intentions, as an expression of his willingness to accept and even encourage multiple interpretations of his work. In fact Shirai often impregnated the words and symbols ornamenting his architecture with ambiguities, elisions, and contradictions, claiming these to be reflections of himself as a fractured subject. For more discussion of the ways in which Shirai undermined determinateness of meaning in his architectural work, see the essay "Perception and Movement." Of course, it could be that Shirai's "square pyramid" was an unwitting recollection of a preliminary version of the proposal, or an imprecise reference to the shallow pyramidal caps of the actual proposal, or a simple semantic confusion over terminology.

[27]Seiichi Shirai, "Genbakudo ni tsuite" 原爆について, [On the Temple of Atomic Catastrophes] in *Shirai Seiichi no Kenchiku*, (Tokyo: Chūoōkōron, 1974), 87.

to exceed it through the invention of singular forms that subvert conventional imagery and allow for the exploration of new perceptual possibilities. In the Santa Chiara hall at the Ibaraki Christian University, for example, the entrance canopy conspires with the asymmetric dimensions of the window casings to fashion a deceptive geometry that thwarts a simple perspectival understanding of the building, an effect whose analytical basis is only fully divulged upon inspection of Shirai's sketch of the western elevation, which appears to combine multiple vantage points within a single plane of vision. In the Shinwa Bank's computer tower Kaishōkan, the disconcertingly undersized roof perches beak-like on top of the two rusticated columnar halves of the frontal facade, paradoxically accentuating the soaring thrust of the tower by capping its vertical growth, and emphasizing through its sharp edges the anthropomorphism of the shaft's carnal roundness. In the Shoto Art Museum, the concavity of the facade, heightened by the horizontality of the stone cladding, combines with the stripe patterns decorating the flat underside of the large lens-shaped canopy to produce a gestalt in which the overhang appears convex.

Even the visual suppression of the roof among some of the projects of this period has been calculated for its visual and visceral impact on the beholder. A spectacular example is NOA, in which the roof seems to have been banished to infinity as part of the building's conception as a primordial being towering over its neighbourhood. In quite an opposite vein is the Shizuoka City Serizawa Keisuke Art Museum (1981), a low-slung single story structure that spreads across its rectangular site at the corner of an archaeological park within a residential part of

the city. Almost as a reaction to NOA's aggressive extroversion, the de-roofing in this case serves to diffuse the public presence of the building, whose mostly windowless external walls are fashioned in coarsely rusticated stone without any coping. These perimeter walls set a medieval tone but are of ultimately ambiguous identity in their evocation of both a European-style castle and the entrance of the pavilion Sekisui-in in the Kosanji temple complex in Kyoto from which Shirai derived his nickname for the museum, Sekisui-kan. The material expression of fortress-like strength is however undercut by the relative diminutiveness of the wall, whose freestanding segments enclosing the entrance are so short that one can almost peer over them. Without any articulation at the top, the wall appears naked, its dignity diminished by its "incompleteness." At the same time, the absence of "roof" has been made visible as a spectral presence in the silhouette of the austere western wall, which consists of two wide peaks of very gentle pitch vaguely reminiscent of earlier projects such as the Matsuida Town Hall and the Tsukushi residence (the former Kondō residence). The vernacular resonance of this shape, however denuded of embellishment or articulation, also serves to temper the building's somewhat alien presence within its low-rise residential environment (fig. 40).

In searching for new perceptual and symbolic effects, Shirai severed the link between roof and authority that was definitive of his earlier projects and eliminated the categorical differences between the roof's two existential modes of presence and absence. Indeed, the formal distinction between these two modes is itself on paradoxical display in the museum as part of a reinvestment o f the roof

with novel and less determinate architectural meanings, epitomizing the third synthetic stage in the evolution of Shirai's negational inversion. Shirai's transformational reincarnation of earlier roof forms can be seen as much as an act of sublation than of rejection, as a self-conscious acknowledgment of the evolutionary path he took as an architect, reaffirmed in the comprehensive photographic compilation *Shirai Seiichi no Kenchiku* and essay volume *Musō*, whose conceptions and design were directed by Shirai himself. This reflexive staging of a process that is almost Hegelian in its unfolding sets Shirai well apart from early modernists such as Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier for whom the expression of newness was of such paramount importance that they conspired to erase the traces of early works that offended their later avant-gardist tenets. As we will see, the mechanism of negational inversion that drives this evolutionary process is applied in ever more elaborate and layered ways when it comes to the column, that basic architectural element through which Shirai comes to negotiate, in intricately interrelated ways, the fundamental dichotomies of form versus content, interior versus exterior, male versus female, dark versus light, and sacred versus mundane. First however we will explore the roots of this conceptual motor in ideas around sexuality, eroticism, and the irrational.

Rational and Irrational

Surfacing very early in Shirai's writings is the notion of contradiction, and specifically the idea of the architect as a rational mind that must negotiate contra-

dictory demands not only of the program and client but also of itself. In reference to the "Ukigumo" hotspring project in Akita, for instance, Shirai speaks of accommodating both the fantasies of local users seeking an atmosphere of urban sophistication and the desires of vacationers from the city for an authentic taste of rural life, and in his reflections on the K-house project he recalls having wrestled with the problem of satisfying his own dreams as an architect while juggling the layers of contradictions stemming from the client's wishes.[28] These struggles quickly became abstractly schematized through material form in ways that set the stage for new architectural narratives that would come to encompass a much broader range of issues and ideas, most fundamentally the dichotomy between rationality and irrationality, which became a touchstone for categorizing the difference he perceived between Western and Japanese thinking. For Shirai the idea of the irrational was a conceptual lever for imagining the possibility of a modern architecture that would eschew the imitation of traditional forms yet be genuinely Japanese.

Already in 1952, just as he was beginning to garner attention as an architect, Shirai began to articulate this theme in a lecture on flower arrangement at Kokugakuin University in which he elevated Japanese creativity as being beyond the reach of scientific inquiry, in a tone still redolent of the nationalism of the wartime period:

[28]Seiichi Shirai, "Chihō no kenchiku" 地方の建築, in *Musō* (Tokyo: Shōbunsha, 2010), 78. Seiichi Shirai, "K-tei to sono shoya ni tsuite" K-邸とその書屋について, in *Musō* (Tokyo: Shōbunsha, 2010), 30.

> If one's intention is to appeal to optical illusions, as in Western classical architecture, to intensify the spatial effect, then modern science may be able to draw certain conclusions about the rationality or irrationality of this method. However, it is inconceivable that this would be a means to understand and to master the secret of the God-given ability of the Japanese people to create form.[29]

The connection that Shirai saw between the idea of contradiction and Japanese form creation was clarified in the 1957 essay "Taian no nijō" on the tea master Sen no Rikyū. While Shirai was critical of Rikyū for being bound by the limitations of irony and the practice of *suki* and for being too conciliatory to the political powers of the time, he nevertheless recognized the tea master as having had an enormous influence on Japanese culture since his death.[30] He describes Rikyū as seeking beauty in unexpected combinations of things, as in the juxtaposition of the refined with the shabby in the hanging of "the precious scroll of a calligraphic work of Ikushima Kidō in the two-tatami-mat room of the sō-an tea house, where 'even one object is gratuitous'." The tea master was "a genius who would focus on the intersection between life and beauty, even in things that appear contradictory to each other according to the order of the aesthetic world," who had a "spiritual power that transcended any understanding (悟性) and encouraged creation from within the époque," and "has directed Japanese-style form up until today after three and a half centuries." On the other hand, in his 1958 essay on the National Theater of Japan, written as a criticism of the narrowly conceived notion of

[29]Seiichi Shirai, "Kadō to kenchiku: nihonkenchiku no dentō" 華道と建築: 日本建築の伝統, in *Muso* (Tokyo: Shōbunsha, 2010), 78.

[30]Seiichi Shirai, "Taian no nijō" 待庵の二畳, in *Musō* (Tokyo: Shōbunsha, 2010), 131,133, 140.

tradition based on form, Shirai cites the Sydney Opera House by Jørn Utzon as an exemplar of the kind of creative work that draws from global cultural inheritance yet still embodies the marine culture associated with the architect's nationality without resorting to overt symbolism. He finds a rational spirit penetrating Utzon's spatial sensibility in the way that the closed mass of the Sumerian ziggurat-like base is rhythmically harmonized with the open forms of the giant shell-like roofs, and saw this kind of negotiation between openness and closedness as one of the fundamental problematics of European civilization.[31] In a 1967 interview with Hiroshi Hara, the year the first phase of the Shinwa Bank headquarters was completed, Shirai reiterates the responsibility of the architect to resolve conflicting demands in the program,

> to complete the individuality of the building into one figure by unifying and balancing these contradictions and matching them to a composite of functions. Of course it would be a problem to represent the contradictions in an awkward way. Any space can be good or bad according to the treatment of the way the contradictions are synthesized. It takes more time and effort than what electronic devices can offer.[32]

One may recognize the Shinwa Bank headquarters as a consummation of the architect's thought during this period, a meticulous juxtaposition of opposing forms, materials, colours, and textures into a synthetic unity whose unorthodox composition nevertheless resisted easy categorization or simple mental capture and invited conflicting reactions from critics and architects. At the same time, the

[31]Seiichi Shirai, "Dentōno atarashii kiken," in *Muso* (Tokyo: Shōbunsha, 2010), 49-57.

[32]Seiichi Shirai and Hiroshi Hara, "Ningen, busshitsu, kenchiku" 人間・物質・建築: 現代のデザインについて語る, in *Shirai seiichi kenchiku o kataru*, 38.

project exposed a certain imprecision and even logical inconsistency in Shirai's adoption of the vocabulary of the rational and irrational. While Shirai's early ideas on this theme seem to remain stuck within a categorical if sometimes slippery association with different forms of cultural practice separating Japan from the West, the Shinwa Bank headquarters in fact ushers in a new and architecturally more consequential phase in Shirai's thinking about the irrational, one that begins as a framework for importing the ideas of Polarism and then in the late work develops into an unfettered and all-consuming elevation of carnal experience and the erotic over abstract reasoning. This marks a shift away from a perspective that looked to essentialize through universals to one that would come to shape an obsessive nominalist practice, a practice that valued individual architectural effects over the reproduction of typological conventions and immediate experience over intellectual apperception, all the while fulfilling programmatic concerns and even exploiting these as a basis for creative freedom.

Rationality and the Tradition Debate

During the early Shōwa period, the word "gōri," meaning "rational," was instrumental for the promotion of Japanese modernization across various sectors. Business leaders advanced a program of industrial rationalization (sangyō gōrika) patterned after German and American models, eventually to be endorsed by bureaucrats at the official state level, while slogans such as "the rationalization of life" (生活の合理化), which fused these campaigns with the government-

sponsored "life improvement movement" (生活改善運動) and appeared in popular magazines targeted at women, advocated for an ethos of economization in household management.[33] In the decade following World War Two, the term gōri continued to be put to rhetorical use, and in rather conflicting ways, in the American occupation forces' program to rationalize the management of Japanese industries through the enactment and enforcement of anti-monopolization measures and then in the countermovement by the Japanese government to moderate competition through policies supporting "rationalization cartels" (gōrika karuteru).

In architecture the theme of rationality was also taken up in various ways during the interwar period. Toshikata Sano's vision of the discipline as being driven by problems of engineering and an imperative to build soundly but economically was widely influential in the academy and in practice, especially in the reconstruction effort following the 1923 Kanto earthquake.[34] Within the idealistic Sōusha (Creation of the Universe Society) movement, founded after the earthquake by draftsmen working at the government's Ministry of Communications and led by Bunzō Yamaguchi, an early mystical fervor gave way in the late 1920s

[33]For the use of the word "rational" in industry, see for example, William Tsutsui, "The Rationalization Movement and Scientific Management, 1927-1937," in *Manufacturing Ideology* (Princeton University Press, 1998), 5889, accessed Dec, 18, 2018, `http://ezproxy.library.tamu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=sih&AN=94143117&site=eds-live`. For the use of the expression "the rationalization of life" in a domestic setting, see Takako Ozeki, " 'Seikatsu g=orika' no genryu: sono gogen to shisōteki keifu" 「生活合理化」の源流: その語源と思想的系譜 [The origin of 'the rationalization of life': its derivation and philosophical genealogy], *21 seiki shakai desain kenkyū* 21世紀社会デザイン研究, no.11 (2012).

[34]Jonathan Reynolds, *Maekawa Kunio and the Emergence of Japanese Modernist Architecture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 20-21.

to a more pragmatic focus on effecting social change through the provision of comfortable but economical building environments under the rubric of "rationalism" (gōrishugi), a word which, as Jonathan Reynolds describes it, "took on a special, almost magical, power" in their later writings.[35] The Bauhaus-inspired Keiji Kōbō ("Ideal Form Atelier"), a group of furniture designers headed by Chikatada Kurata, promoted a "rational" Western style of living among ordinary Japanese citizens through the development of tatami-friendly chairs that could be made widely available through mass production.[36] The concept of rational design also acquired a complicated currency in debates around tradition and regionalism after the dissemination of the ideas and observations of the exiled German architect Bruno Taut, who extolled certain kinds of Japanese traditional architecture as embodying a proto-modernist spirit through such features as modularity, standardized construction, and a general lack of ornament and thereby provided a validation of Japanese cultural heritage for many architects of the time.

After the war, the issues of tradition and rationalization took on new valencies. While a boom in building accelerated the drive towards efficiency and standardization among large construction firms such as Takenaka and Ōbayashi corporations, among those with a stake in architecture and other related disciplines as a cultural and social practice the question of national identity became a contested subject in the wake of the 1951 security treaty that ended the American oc-

[35]Ibid., 30.

[36]Hiroshi Kashiwagi, "On Rationalization and the National Lifestyle," in *Being Modern in Japan: Culture and Society from the 1910s to the 1930s*, ed. Elise K. Tipton, John Clark (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000), 64-65.

cupation. Industrial designers such as Isamu Kenmochi grappled with the problem of what form Japanese modern design might take as they became involved in the staging of overseas exhibitions promoting Japanese goods abroad, where they saw a demand for high quality products born out of Japan's contemporary life and industry, a demand which could not be satisfied by the cheap commercial trinkets that Kenmochi derided as "japonica."[37] In architecture, the critic Noboru Kawazoe seized on the issue of tradition as a way to invigorate public debate and broaden the readership of the journal Shinkenchiku under his editorship, launching the so-called "tradition debate" that unfolded in this and other journals in the mid-1950s. [38]

In one of the earliest of the Shinkenchiku articles, Kenzō Tange proposed a general architectural program whose aim would be to marry function and tradition through a kind of evolutionary process that he called "typification" in which a typical but culturally specific space emerges out of a user's everyday activi-

[37]Some of the exhibitions that took place in the 1950s are the Canadian International Trade Fair, Toronto (1953), the 400-year anniversary of Sao Paulo (1954), the fourth international Trade Fair, Seattle, Washington (1955), the Helsingborg Exhibition in Sweden (H55, 1955), Milan Triennale (1957) and the Expo 58 at Brussel (1958). According to Aiko Terao, it was in response to the cheap commercialism of the Canadian fair that a certain design standard came to be demanded. See Aiko Terao 寺尾藍子, "Japanese Modern Design in 1950's : Representation of Design in the exhibitions abroad 1950 年代日本のモダンデザイン: 海外展におけるデザイン表現について," *Dezain riron* デザイン理論 63 (2013), 33-48, accessed Jan. 17, 2019, `http://hdl.handle.net/11094/56292`. For Kenmochi's opinion on the "japonica" trend, see Isamu Kenmochi 剣持勇, "Japanese modern & Japonica style: Two Roads to put Japanese Industrial Arts on Foreign Export" ジャパニーズ・モダーンか, ジャポニカ・スタイルか: 輸出工芸の二つの道, *Industrial Art News* 工芸ニュース 22, no.9 (Sept. 1954), 2-7, accessed April 17, 2019, `https://unit.aist.go.jp/tohoku/techpaper/pdf/3284.pdf`.

[38]For a general account on the issue of tradition, see Kenji Kajiya, "Posthistorical traditions in art, design, and architecture in 1950s Japan," *World Art* 5, no. 1 (2015): 21-38.

ties.[39] In his own work Tange often gave representation to tradition through explicit quotation of formal elements from historical models, as for example in the evocation of traditional timber construction in the concrete forms of the Kagawa Prefectural Office (fig. 42). At the same time he actively introduced technology in his practice, not only for the purposes of mounting the structural exhibitionism of a project like the Yoyogi Gymnasium but also in the analysis of circulation data through numerical simulation as one of the early adoptors of computers.[40] Such an attitude towards scientific inquiry would be passed on to Tange's students, several of whom were instrumental in establishing the Metabolism movement, which imagined urban circulation in terms of biological metaphors and reinterpreted the rational vision of Le Corbusier's "Radiant City" through curvilinear and reticular forms.

The theme of rationality is also latent in the short Shinkenchiku essay "Jōmon teki narumono" that marked Shirai's entry into the tradition debate. While in his early work Shirai took pride in the way he was able to fulfill the demands to economize without compromising architectural integrity, and even leveraged budgetary pressures as a spur to the creative sourcing and use of materials, it was the use of the word rationality in the sphere of visual art that came to more expressly inform Shirai's theoretical reflections about architecture and the ways

[39]Kenzo Tange, "Creation in Present-day Architecture and the Japanese Architectural Tradition," *Shinkenchiku* 31, no. 6 (June 1956): 32-33.

[40]For an account of the use of computer technology by Tange and his laboratory, see Akihiro Mizutani, "Re-evalutation of Computational Design of Tange Lab and its Importance of Today: Focusing on Computer Simulation Methods and its Theory," *Journal of Environ. Eng. (Transactions of AIJ)* 81, no.723 (May 2016): 487-494.

that they manifested in his practice, particularly through an understanding of its pairing with the notion of irrationality as a positive and necessary force. Shirai's Shinkenchiku text, which was in part a protest against the commercialization of tradition in Japonica, embraced the "primitive strength" and "tough, resilient spirit" that he associated with the ancient Jōmon period and proposed the Egawa residence in Nirayama as an architectural exemplar of the Jōmon ethos.[41] This Edo-period residence, owned over many generations by a family of district administrators but in a state of dereliction at the time of Shirai's writing, was a kind of building that would not have been included in the canon of traditional Japanese architecture, which encompassed Minka farm houses and aristocratic Shoin-style residences as representative structures.

In his appeal to Jōmon culture Shirai was clearly taking a cue from Tarō Okamoto, a prominent avant-garde artist who a few years earlier, in a surprising and provocative move, had argued for the reevaluation of Jōmon-era pottery as aesthetic objects whose expression of strength through asymmetry and spatial dynamism reflected a forgotten creative energy that could work to catalyze a new Japanese tradition free from pre-existing models.[42] As Okamoto pointed out, Jōmon practices were popularly viewed as having no connection to the formation of historical Japanese culture, while the later Yayoi period was thought of as being the origin of the qualities that had come to be stereotypically identified with this culture, such as planarity, orthogonal geometry, and a sense of serenity.

[41]Shirai, "Jōmon teki narumono," in *Shinkenchiku*, 4.
[42] Okamoto, "Jōmon doki-ron" in *Bijutsu techo*, 51-66.

Okamoto believed however that the dynamic formal impulses of the Jōmon had become repressed in the Yayoi and subsequent cultural developments and held valuable lessons for contemporary cultural production.[43] While Shirai also took up this framing of Japan's cultural heritage in terms of an opposition between the Jōmon and the Yayoi, his stress was rather on the abstract dialectical nature of this duality, as one between a generative energy and the appearance and conventionalization of form, a basic struggle between the "a priori functions inherent in human beings" and "a posteriori things."[44]

Okamoto's Polarism

Shirai's brief essay was significant in the concrete and novel ways that it reimagined the Jōmon spirit in architectural terms and served for example to transform Tange's opinion about the contemporary relevance of Jōmon culture, but only goes so far as a means for illuminating Shirai's own work. Indeed Shirai himself later downplayed the debate and stated that this essay was merely a cursory window into more fundamental issues and a protest against the superficial conception of tradition associated with Japonica.[45] He also became critical of the way that the idea of Jōmon had come to be interpreted through the use

[43]Okamoto,"Jōmon doki-ron," 54, 58.

[44]In order to describe the relationship between the Jōmon and Yayoi in the original Japanese text, Shirai uses the word han-gō (反合), which is part of the expression sei-han-gō (正反合) that conventionally refers to the Hegelian dialectical process of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. This connection to philosophy is lost in the English translation by Stanley N. Anderson, which adopted instead the word "conflict." See Shirai and Taniuchi, ed., *Shirai seiichi: seishin to kūkan*, 174.

[45]See Seiichi Shirai, Hiroshi Hara, Kō Miyauchi, "Sōzō no ronri: seishin no kōhai no nakade" 創造の論理: 精神の荒廃のなかで [The logic of creation: in the midst of spiritual ruin], in *Shirai seiichi kenchiku o kataru*, 133-134.

of "bizarre objets" and an "imported abstract" as a means to overcome tradition, apparently targeting the kind of practice that Okamoto exemplified, a practice that Okamoto would also pursue in his architectural collaborations with Tange, most spectacularly in the Festival Plaza of the 1970 Osaka Expo.[46]

What is actually more resonant with the evolution of Shirai's own design philosophy is an earlier manifesto of Okamoto's that introduced the idea of polarism (taikyoku-shugi), whose aim was to stimulate revolutionary artistic invention through a violent confrontation between Surrealism and what Okamoto opposes to it under the rubric "Abstract Art." This confrontation was a theme that Okamoto developed in the 1930s during his sojourn in Paris, where he participated in a variety of salon activities representing the two camps, including the Abstraction-Création exhibition in 1933 and the Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme in 1938.[47] The idea that the genealogy of modern art could be traced through the interaction of two main currents was advanced by Alfred Barr Jr. and illustrated in a flowchart on the cover of his book *Cubism and Abstract Art*, which accompanied a 1936 exhibition of the same name at the Museum of Modern Art.[48] This chart, which divided the most recent practices into the two categories of "geometrical abstract art" and "non-geometrical abstract art," was first made widely available to a Japanese audience through its reproduction in the journal *Atorie*

[46]Shirai, "Dentō no atarashii kiken,"56.

[47]For a discussion on the genesis of the idea of polarism, see Shōgo Ōtani, "The Formation of Okamoto Taro's 'Polarism'," *Bulletin of the National Museum of Moder Art, Tokyo* 13 (2009): 18-36.

[48]Alfred Barr Jr. ed., *Cubism and Abstract Art* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1936), accessed on April 17, 2019, `https://www.moma.org/documents/moma_catalogue_2748_300086869.pdf`.

(Atelier) one year later.[49] Okamoto also included it in his first monograph *Avangyarudo (Avant-garde)*, which collected both essays and paintings by the artist.[50] As Ōtani has observed, however, Okamoto did not faithfully reproduce the original, as was the case with *Atorie*, but rather extended the time period from 1935 to 1940 and substituted the two final headings of "geometric abstract art" and "non-geometrical abstract art" with "Surrealism" and "Abstract Art," thus significantly altering the conception of these categories, if not their actual content, through a dissociation of the idea of the abstract from Surréalist art.[51] While Barr explained that the two currents often intermingled in practice, for Okamoto they represented mutually repulsing forces, forces with distinct national origins in their intellectual genealogy, with the roots of Surrealism tracing back to German Romanticism and those of "abstractism" to French Enlightenment ideals.[52] By asserting that the two streams violently oppose each other and that this antagonism is characteristic of twentieth century art, Okamoto opened up a gap that enabled him to validate his own work as an innovative bridge that combined the two.

Okamoto's ideas about polarism were laid out in the short essay "Taikyoku-

[49] Alfred H. Barr, Jr., "Cubism and Abstract Art 印象派より抽象絵画へ [From Impressionism to Abstract Art]," trans. Takeo Terada 寺田竹雄, *Atorie* アトリエ 14, no. 6 (June, 1937): 38-58.

[50] Tarō Okamoto, *Okamoto tarō gabunshū: avangyarudo* 岡本太郎画文集: アヴァンギャルド (Getsuyō shobō, 1948).

[51] Shōgo Ōtani, "Okamoto Taro's 'Polarism'," 25-26. Masahiko Mori also notes the substitution. Masahiko Mori 森雅彦, "Modan āto toiu 'rekishi=monogatari": modanisumu saikō" 近代芸術 (モダン・アート) という「歴史＝物語」: モダニスム再考 *Jinbun shakai kagaku ronsō, Miyagi Gakuin Women's University* 宮城学院女子大学人文社会科学論叢, no.24 (March 2015): 15.

[52] Tarō Okamoto, "Avangyarudo geijutsu no gensen" アヴァンギャルド芸術の源泉, in *Avangyarudo*, 78-88.

shugi" (polarism), which begins as follows:

> I see two mutually strongly repelling currents within the revolutionary avant-garde movements of the twentieth-century. One is the aesthetics that recompose inorganic elements of rationally mechanized abstract paintings, and the other is the extreme irrationalisms such as Dadaism and Surrealism that emerged as violent antitheses against it. These two currents, which most resolutely carried the fate of twentieth-century, developed by mutually negating each other. When each of them is satisfied within its own camp, however, the rationalists would be content with conceptual aesthetics and the Surrealists would show a noticeable tendency to take a flight into dreams and mad fantasies. It is easy to escape into beauty and dreams when one faces today's reality fraught with contradictions. Naturally there would emerge a void. What would be required here is spirit that can fill this gap.
>
> We must face reality squarely. One ought to call this attitude not simply romantic but rather romantic at the same time extremely realistic. By first observing reality calmly, ascertaining the two polarity mentioned above, then grasping this subjectivity, one can progress forward within their tension without compromising either. Today a dignified soul should not attain spiritual peace inclining towards either rationalism or irrationalism. Nor should it create a lukewarm cocktail by fusing them together. The spirit's way of being is a violent spectacle of sparks generated by the tension between two poles that attract and rebel intensely, and is an atrocity like that of a gaping wound.
>
> This attitude must first of all be scientific and revolutionary. The sharper this [attitude], the more necessarily there would arise an opportunity to usher in the opposite moment of irrational subjective pathos and generate contradictions (this fact should not be hidden politically). Artists must accept these contradictions and undergo desperate experience, and I hereby name polarism [taikyokushugi] the creative act which emphasizes this being aware of it [the contradictions].[53]

For Okamoto the concept of polarism did not simply provide a theoretical orien-

[53]Tarō Okamoto, "Taikyoku-shugi" 対極主義, in *Avangyarudo*, 123-124.

tation for artistic practice but also had technical ramifications in relation to the question of representation in painting through the dissonant clash it stages between abstract (rational) and Surrealistic (irrational) elements and between the terms of such dichotomies as inorganic versus organic, repulsion versus attraction, and beauty versus ugliness.[54] While the specific opposition between rationality and irrationality figured into Shirai's thinking in a completely different and culturally essentialist way as a means for articulating his ambition to forge authentic modern Japanese architecture, what Shirai shares with Okamoto's Polarist polemic is a quasi-Romantic aesthetic strategy that aims to orchestrate the interference of opposites, not so that these would cancel each other in a higher synthesis or be fused into a "lukewarm cocktail" but rather to spark a frictive energy fueled by a sharp differential of qualities each retaining their own integrity. In Shirai's case this strategy was implemented, somewhat ironically in relation to Okamoto's vision, as an increasingly systematic and rationally conceived policy of inversion through material and form as a way to inject the "irrational" into his work. The architectural specificity of these moves moreover distinguished Shirai's method from the vague programmatic generality of Okamoto's dualities and ultimately acquired an independent disciplinary logic that served to open up new spatial and symbolic possibilities.

There is also some irony in the fact that Shirai's idea of inversion appears to have evolved in part out of early attitudes towards abstraction and symbolism that have been linked by some commentators to Surrealist methodology. In a

[54]Okamoto, "Taikyoku-shugi," 124.

1957 essay, Yūichiro Kōjiro recognized an affinity between Shirai's use of baseless and capitalless fluted columns in such projects as the Matsuida Town Hall and the Temple of Atomic Catastrophes and the appearance of Roman arches in De Chirico's paintings or Greek columns in Paul Delvaux's "Lunar City," whose anachronistic suspensions of a sense of place and time stimulate the beholder's imagination through an appeal to the unconscious.[55] In a conversation with Shirai, Kōjiro made the following comment:

> Take for example what Breton says in his manifesto. In order to engage two things that are only loosely related, I think that this would be problematized as a matter of creative composition, and I am not sure if yours really functions well psychologically in these situations; in any case, when creating a composite by drawing out the essentials, you are following the kind of symbolic method that Surrealists would pursue.[56]

On the other hand, it is precisely the vaguely suggestive but ultimately ambiguous symbolic valency of Shirai's fluted column, devoid of base and capital, that allowed Shirai to deny, as he did in the conversation with Kōjiro, any intentional association with ancient Greek civilization. This capacity to evoke but not confirm within a shared imagination through a symbolic resonance that remains incomplete in its material figuration speaks to what Barr called "near-abstraction,"

[55]Yūichiro Kōjiro 神代雄一郎, "Girisha no hashira to nihon no minshū: Shirai Seiichi no ichimen" ギリシャの柱と日本の民衆：白井晟一の一面, *Kenchiku Bunka* 建築文化 12, no.7 (July 1957), 55.

[56]In "Girisha no hashira," Kōjiro includes the quote "the more the relationship between the two juxtaposed realities is distant and true, the stronger the image will be—the greater its emotional power and poetic reality." Kōjiro attributes this to Breton's first Surrealist manifesto, but in fact Breton was quoting from a text by Pierre Reverdy that appeared in the March 1918 issue of the journal *Nord-Sud*. Kōjiro, "Girisha no hashira," 55.

which Barr described as a process of starting with "natural forms" and transforming them in the direction of the kind of pure abstraction which characterizes "geometric abstract art" and which by definition this process can never quite attain.[57] Although insisting that his method was different from that of the Surrealists, Shirai was nevertheless receptive to Kōjiro's analysis, which he felt clarified his architecture and could lead to further insights.[58] In fact, in an earlier essay Shirai argued against the notion of beauty as a creation of human activity through self-conscious desiring and singled out the capacities for symbolism and abstraction as the two fundamental faculties that have been bestowed to humankind.[59] At the same time, Shirai's thinking about the interrelationship between the two expressive modes of symbolism and abstraction had already acquired a dialectical flavour in his Temple of Atomic Catastrophes project from 1955 that thrust it outside the kind of Surrealist framework of simple decontextualization and juxtaposition that Kōjiro would describe: the fluted but capitalless and baseless columns and the almost imperceptible pyramidality of the caps of the main pavilion test the limits of Barr's idea of near-abstraction in their service to Shirai's idealist aim of creating a "purity of form" that could function as "an eternal symbol of the yearning for coexistence." [60]

[57] Alfred Barr Jr., *Cubism and Abstract Art*, 12-13.

[58] Seiichi Shirai and Yūichiro Kōjiro, "Taidan, girishano hashira to nihon no minshū o yonde: sakka Shirai Seiichi no kenchiku sōzō o megutte" 対談ギリシャの柱と日本の民衆を読んで: 作家・白井晟一の建築創造をめぐって, *Kenchiku bunka* 建築文化 12, no.7 (July, 1957): 67.

[59] Seiichi Shirai, "Meshi" in *Musō* (Tokyo: Shōbunsha, 2010), 122.

[60] More recently Isozaki, in a casual conversation with Fujimori, described a Surrealistic affinity between Shirai and De Chirico's works. Given Fujimori's understanding that there was a divergence between Surrealism and "Abstract Art" that occurred in the 1930s, Isozaki and Fujimori both characterized Shirai as belonging to the former camp. See Fujimori and Isozaki, *modanizumu*

Another resonance with the impulses behind Polarist thinking, more formal and circumstantial in nature, is the motif of the ellipse in Shirai's work, a motif which we will examine in more detail later in connection with bodily experience. While for Isozaki this conic section was an embodiment of the Baroqueness that he regarded as characteristic of the later period of Shirai's architectural career, beginning with the Kaishōkan computer tower in the 1970s and following a more eclectic "mannerist" phase, one can also see in the geometry of the ellipse a formal encapsulation of the basic principle of polarism as a volatile quasi-synthesis of two irreconcilable ideas or "foci." Such an association between elliptical form and an irresolvably antagonistic dualism was made by the literary critic Kiyoteru Hanada in his short 1943 essay "Daen gensō: Villon" (elliptical fantasy: Villon).[61] Hanada describes the fifteenth-century French poet François Villon as the discoverer of elliptical form within the earthly realm and, in the last paragraph, injects himself into the narrative in a politically coded way by comparing Villon's depictions of a conflict between opposites with his own stranded situation, revolving around two foci yet preferring this course over the single centre of a unitary authoritarianism. Hanada would play an instrumental role in the formulation of Okamoto's conception of polarism after the two discovered in the late 1940s that they shared similar ideas, which were debated in the study group *yoru no kai* (The Night Society) that they went on to jointly organize.[62] Later in the 1970s,

kenchiku dangi, 173, 174-177.

[61]Kiyoteru Hanada 花田清輝, "Daen gensō: Villon," in *Fukkouki no seishin* 復興期の精神 (Tokyo: Kōdansha bungei bunko, 2008), 217-226.

[62]See Ōtani, "Okamoto Tarō no 'taikyoku shugi'," 29-33, for an account of the way that the idea of polarism emerged from Okamoto's association with Hanada.

Kazuyuki Honda, in attempting to address the apparent contradiction in Shirai's architecture between its common reception as a heterodox creation and its orthodox insistence on the ellipse as a recurrent theme, took up Hanada's analogization of the qualities of genericity and ambiguity through elliptical form and interpreted the doubly focused conic as a symbol of "the fractured self and the dissolution of the modern ego."[63]

In the end, however, despite the power of the ellipse as a mathematical shorthand for schematizing issues ranging from the political to the aesthetic, we must understand its representational presence in Shirai's work as that of an orphaned signifier, much like the fluted columns and shallow pyramidal caps of the Temple of Atomic Catastrophes, teasing but floating in its symbolic indeterminacy, with the corresponding signified, if it at all exists, inaccessible and ultimately irrelevant. In fact Shirai's increasingly prodigious use of the ellipse, understood à la Kōjiro as part of a Surrealist tactic in which distilled and decontextualized symbols are juxtaposed together, ironically served to evacuate the figure of any a priori representational content, and in particular the formal connection to polarism, leaving it as an empty semiotic vessel that can be freely exploited to novel symbolic and phenomenological ends in the construction of an architectural mise-en-scène.

[63]Kazuyuki Honda 本田一勇, "Daen hyōhaku: sei naru kūkan no yohaku ni" 楕円漂白: 聖なる空間の余白に, *Kindai kenchiku [Contemporary Architecture of the World]* 28, no. 11 (1974): 73-78.

From Polarism to Sexuality

While formal correlatives of Polarist and Surrealist thinking continued to figure into Shirai's work up until the end of his career through the creation and juxtapostion of symbolic objects in "near-abstract" form, this kind of design strategy was to expand into the more sophisticated methodology of inversion that aimed to manipulate a variety of contrasting effects and phenomena in an integrative and fundamentally architectural way. An example illustrating this development that was mentioned earlier and discussed in detail in the previous chapter is the Ōhato branch of the Sasebo Bank from 1963, whose architectural promenade is coordinated not only through the tension between the main volume and the outer colonnade that partly occludes it but also through the cunning perceptual play in the way that the texts announcing the bank and branch names are inscribed into the stone facades.[64]

Another project from the same year that takes more eclectic approach in the combination of volumes, shapes, and surfaces is the Tokyo branch of the Sasebo bank (fig. 43). The two-story sculptural base housing the bank and clad in grey Ajiishi granite starkly contrasts with the boxy upper tower clad in small dark tiles, with the bullseye-patterned band of the slightly recessed intermediate level separating the two like a tightened belt. Inside the square entrance cavity is nestled a small pavilion housing the entranceway, slightly billowing in its sculptural form, with a shallow pyramidal cap, and plainly clad in the same granite. At

[64]See "Perception and Movement."

the top of the building, a two-story knob projects above the northern edge of the main volume, the curved surface of one of its sides subtly disturbing the rigorous planarity of the tower facade beneath it. The symmetry of the building's profile helps to establish a certain monumental impression from the southern entrance side, but is corrupted on the eastern elevation by the introduction of off-balanced elements to both the base and tower top, which serve to emphasize the sense of incompleteness in the configuration of the disjoint "fingers" of tile surface that alternate with the three vertical bands of recessed fenestration running up the tower and extend somewhat above the roof, uncapped by a cornice.

If the play of form and material that animates the Tokyo Branch of the Shinwa Bank gives an impression of being experimental or ad hoc, it was Shirai's next project for the same bank, namely the first two phases of its headquarters in Sasebo, that clarified and codified his design impulses into a rational strategy in which contrasting forms, materials, colours, and cladding patterns are methodically arranged in juxtaposition. This strategy of inversion as a generative design principle was widely implemented in institutional and commercial projects after the Shinwa Bank headquarters, but rather than remaining an abstract conceptual play it was expanded as a kind of disruptive dynamic to the cultural and symbolic allusions that Shirai frequently invested in his architecture, thus transforming this master concept into an ever more versatile tool that could be used to disorient, provoke, and critique.

One natural domain of application for this broadened program which in many ways came to dominate Shirai's later large-scale projects lay in the sexual figura-

tion of building form and the eroticism of material. These themes are already incipient in the Shinwa Bank headquarters, if not as graphically elaborated as in later works. Ichirō Hariu suggestively referred to the bifurcated interior promenade of the northern building from the foyer up to the fourth floor hall as a "tour of the womb."[65] The architectural journalist Keiichi Taira moreover described the initial and terminal points of this promenade as sexual symbols signifying maternal regression, comparing it to the space in the mountains of Dewasanzan where secretive ascetic rituals said to be imbued with sexual meaning took place.[66] Hasegawa later offered an interpretation of the exterior form of the two structures as representing the couple Okina and Ouna from classical Noh theatre, with the cantilevered first phase embodying masculine spirit and the grounded mass of the second phase likened to a female figure sitting in the formal *seiza* manner.[67] Pursuing this logic further, one even sees Hasegawa's sexual duality being rehearsed as a kind of retrospective mise-en-abyme in the northern building itself, in the penetration of the vaginally slitted angular volume by the black granite core. This sexual metaphorization of architectural form, at once hermaphroditic and copulative, would become ever more instrumental to the conception of the later institutional and commercial projects, in many cases taking on a more explicitly graphic character and often acquiring a psychological or political dimension. Moreover, while the gendered spectacle of the Sasebo complex is tempered

[65]Hariu, "kannen no kokkaku," 29.

[66]Keiichi Taira, " 'Kongenteki sekai' e no shikō: Shirai Seiichi no gohoō o megutte" 根源的世界への志向: 白井晟一の合法をめぐって, in *Annual of Architecture in Japan, 1969* 1969 年建築年鑑 (Tokyo: Kenchiku jānarizumu kenkūjo, 1969), 24.

[67]Hasegawa, "Seishun to enjuku no kisetsu," 176-177.

with a sense of formal decorum, registering at an intellectual level that remains essentially detached from the material engagement of the subject, the anthropomorphic expressiveness of the later works will become invested with an intensity and obscenity that verges on the violative, provoking personal reactions at the most visceral levels through an architectural maelstrom of architectural dichotomies engineered in material and form through an sophisticated conceptual technology of inversion.

Shirai's interest in sexuality and eroticism as a vehicle for artistic expression can in fact be traced back much further than the projects of the 1960s and 1970s in which these themes were first overtly developed in an architectural form. An early example that hinted at a deep personal investment is the book design that he carried out in 1936, under the pseudonym Yōsuke Minamisawa (南澤用介), for the collection of short stories *Aijō* written by his former lover Fumiko Hayashi. Each of the otherwise bare near-white surfaces of the front and back of the volume's slipcase is marked by a small horizontally centred red disk, disconcertingly evocative of both a rivet head and a blood stain, while a pubic wreath nestles the title of the book on the cover (fig. 19).[68]

Curiously, such graphic public displays of sexuality appear to be at odds with Shirai's strong distaste, articulated in writings, interviews, and conversa-

[68]The name Minamisawa 南澤 was likely to have been taken from the name of the district Minamisawa Gakuenchō in Higashikurume, Tokyo, the location of his sister and brother-in-law's residence, in whose design Shirai was heavily involved. See Shirai seiichi kenkūjo, *Shirai Seiichi zenshū hoi* 白井晟一全集補遺 (Kyoto: Dōhōsha, 1988), 117. Shirai's romantic relationship was chronicled in Hayashi's diary. See Hayashi and Imagawa, *Hayashi fumiko pari no koi*. For a more detailed discussion of the cover and slipcase design for the book *Aijō*, see the chapter "Perception and Movement."

tions from the early 1950s onwards, for the contemporary updating of sukiya, the style historically tied to the pleasure quarters of geisha. Sukiya was promoted as a specifically Japanese aesthetic category by Sutemi Horiguchi in the mid-1920s and was subsequently employed in residential and other work by architects such as Isoya Yoshida and Tōgo Murano. In a way that recalls certain ideas of Adolf Loos, Shirai regarded this application of the sukiya aesthetic in broader social arenas as completely inappropriate because of its disruption of the principles of decorum that ensure the spiritual health of the citizenry. While Shirai designed nearly eighty Japanese-style rooms, he modeled these on the more disciplined shoin-zukuri associated with the warrior class and their spiritual rectitude.[69]

At the same time, erotic allusions abound in Shirai's later masonry buildings, from the conception of the NOA building as a dōsojin, a deity associated with procreation, to what Isozaki described as the vaginal entrance of the Kaishōkan tower of the Shinwa Bank at Sasebo, and even to the echoing of the word "sexy" in the Serizawa Keisuke Museum's nickname Sekisui-kan.The Shoto Museum can be recognized in its plan as a womb, and built into its exterior wall is a water fountain whose faucet is suggestive of a boy's genitalia. Even more explicit is a sketch Shirai left behind of an ionic capital that can also be read as the cross section of woman's parted legs.[70]

[69]In an interview with Osamu Kurita, Shirai expressed his preference for shoin, or rather its precedents before their corruption by foreign influences, over sukiya. See Osamu Kurita 栗田勇, "Shirai seiichi kenchiku to sho" 白井晟一建築と書 in *Shirai seiichi kenchiku o kataru*, 186-188.

[70]Perhaps this obscene sketch was not meant to be disseminated, but it was later published in a collection of reproductions prepared by his son Ikuma. See Okazaki, "Gijutsu no jōken, kōhen," 192, for the sketch.

The intentionality behind these kinds of associations is confirmed in a particularly graphic way by the hermaphroditic anatomical forms traced out by the plan of the unrealized Ōmura Seminary project from 1975 (fig. 44). These explicit forms invite a similarly sexualized reading of the building's exterior elevations, which present an eclectic amalgamation of various geometric volumes punctured with differently shaped apertures that read like a compendium of windows and entrances that Shirai had used and would use in realized works, including the oversized entrance arch of the NOA building and the octagonal tower and oculus of the Serisawa Keisuke Museum. Not only must we accordingly view the orifices and cavities in Shirai's later institutional buildings as being infused with eroticism, but this frame of interpretation can now also be seen to apply retroactively to earlier projects, such as in the slit windows of the Temple of Atomic Catastrophes, the Zenshōji temple, and the Tokyo branch of the Shinwa Bank, which in themselves do not overtly communicate any extra-architectural meaning. In fact, beginning in the 1960s every aspect of the building design, from the overall massing to the choices of material, becomes charged with the potential for an erotic or sexual reading.

It is not surprising that, in their critical reflections on the first two phases of the Shinwa Bank headquarters, Hariu, Taira, and Hasegawa all turned to anatomical and gender-based metaphors given that this was a time in which issues around eros and the body were being explored by several prominent figures in different artistic spheres, such as Yukio Mishima in literature, Tatsumi Hijikata in dance, and Eikō Hosoe and Daidō Moriyama in photography. While eroticism had long

been an undercurrent in Japanese visual culture, from the shunga prints of the Edo period to the titillating and grotesque images of "Ero-guro-nansensu" in the interwar era, in the 1950s and 60s it was aggressively taken up by the artistic avant-garde as a vehicle for expression whose provocative force had been amplified through more existential associations with death in the wake of World War Two and of the 1960 Anpo treaty protests that were marked by violent clashes with the police.

It was through art critics like Hariu and Hasegawa that the subjects of eroticism and the body entered into architectural discourse, providing a counterweight to the technology-driven obsessions with economy and efficiency that increasingly dominated the construction industry. The contact with the spheres of visual art and literature was made physically manifest in the 1969 volume of *Annual of Architecture in Japan*, which showcases the Shinwa Bank headquarters as its annual prize winner in a section that includes Taira's anatomical descriptions of the project. Immediately following this feature on the Shinwa Bank is a provocative article by Kō Miyauchi and Yasuyoshi Hayashi which addresses the theme of aesthetics in relation to violence, weapons, war, and the body and is overlaid with images so graphically aggressive as to hinder legibility of some of the text, and an essay by Kōji Taki on eroticism and the boundaries between art and everyday life.[71] While neither of these latter two texts mention the bank or Shirai, the

[71]Kōji Taki 多木浩二, "Geijutsu wa kanōka: ikei bigaku no tame no josetsu" 芸術わ可能か: 異形の美学のための序説 [Is Art Possible?: an Introduction to the Aesthetics of the Grotesque], in *Annual of Architecture in Japan '69* 建築年鑑 1969 年版, Yoshihisa Miyauchi ed., (Tokyo: Kenchiku jānarizumu kenkūsho, 1969), 73-80.

editorial intent of association by juxtaposition is clear.

The themes of sexuality and eroticism would come to be expressed in Shirai's work from late 1960s onward through a number of guises that encompass the various dichotomies of domestic versus public, interior versus exterior, sacred versus mundane, and anima versus persona, the last of which entered into Shirai's vocabulary in the late 1970s.[72] We shall now examine in detail the Santa Chiara building, NOA building, Shoto Museum of Art, and Shizuoka City Serizawa Keisuke Art Museum, four of the major institutional works from Shirai's late period that exhibit a sophisticated web of inversions that variously engage the visitors through symbolic and phenomenological interactions involving eroticism and the dichotomies coupled with it.

Santa Chiara

The Santa Chiara building on the campus of Ibaraki Christian University, the second of Shirai's institutional projects to be realized after the twin buildings of the Shinwa Bank headquarters, ushered in a new period in the work of the architect in which the play of dichotomies incipient at Sasebo was marshaled into a deliberate strategy that would have far-reaching effects in its symbolic and phenomenological provocations.[73] This project can be viewed as a formal successor

[72]See the essay "Perception and Movement" for a discussion on anima and persona.

[73]The building's name in katakana reads phonetically as "santa kiara," which derives from the Italian "Santa Chiara." On the exterior wall, however, is engraved the English equivalent "ST CLARA," which is sometimes used to refer to the building in English language articles. I will refer to it as Santa Chiara in this essay. Shirai's first institutional work after the Shinwa Bank headquarters was the San Sebastian building from 1972, also at Ibaraki Christian University.

to the Shinwa Bank headquarters in its abutment of two contrasting masses, but this time the juxtaposition was not a response to external contingencies in the client's progressive development of the project through phases—Shirai later compared the design process of the headquarters to that of Hagia Sophia—but rather conceived as a constitutive feature of the original design scheme (fig. 46).

The building extends lengthwise along a north-south axis on a sloping site and is circumscribed by a road and foot path that allow for elevational views from all directions. The brick-clad northern half, lower in height but monumental in its monolithic mass, is evocative of both a ship hull and a Norman apsidal church (compare for example St. Swithun's church in Nately Scures, England) and houses the chapel (fig. 45). While the apsidal space at the very northern end contains a stage from which religious services can be performed, the fixed orientation of a traditional church has been traded for the flexibility of having an alternative eastern orientation facing a lower but ampler second stage. Light is drawn into the chapel through three narrow vertical windows in the western wall as well as through two windows hidden deep within and to the side of the vertical slit that splits the apsidal end at its midpoint (fig. 48). The latter windows serve to bathe the back wall of the interior altar space with a circular halo of light (fig. 47). At the same time this celestial radiance, in one of many acts of inversion that structure the building's architectural logic, is negated in the erotic invagination of its exterior counterpart, the sensuously curved brick wall that, skin-like, folds into the dark recess that cleaves the apsidal elevation. Luminous expansiveness and shadowy intimacy are thus exchanged here in an unexpected

counterpositioning that reverses the conventional spatial associations of interior and exterior, of private fantasy and communal devotion.

In stark contrast with the chapel, the two-story southern wing of the building housing classrooms and offices is almost domestic in appearance. The eastern and western facades are a combination of brick and stucco punctuated by squarish mullionless windows, and the visibly pitched roof is clearly articulated by an overhang (fig. 46). At the same time this domestic legibility is distorted by the geometric figure of the plan, an elongated hexagonal prism, whose shape is hard to discern from both inside and outside (fig. 49).

The architecture critic Shūji Funo described the coupling of the two contrasting volumes in erotic terms, as "a dialectic of two masses (二つの量塊)" in which "an acute-angled wedge with white wall surfaces and large windows of various sizes is locked into an unarticulated closed, elliptical red mass."[74] What Funo does not mention is the unsettling effect that the differential in size and surface treatment between the two masses has on the relative perception of each as a typological representative. While the choice and application of material, overall gestalt of the building form, and shape and articulation of the fenestration and roof are put to work in each of the two cases to conjure diametrically opposed mental images, one of domesticity and the other of solemn otherworldliness, the scales are almost comically reversed in a kind of perceptual inversion that was

[74]The article in which this discussion appears was written under the pseudonym 悠木一也, which may be pronounced Kazuya Yūki, though I was not able to confirm the pronunciation. Kazuya Yūki 悠木一也, "Nusumi enu, keiken na inori ni sasaegerareta massu: santa kiara o mite" 盗み得ぬ、敬虔な祈りに捧げられた量塊：サンタ・キアラ館を見て, *Kenchiku Bunka* 建築文化 30, no. 339 (1975): 76.

also experimented with in the contemporaneous NOA building.[75]

The intimate and the sacred are also integrated, but in a rather different way, in the hallway-cum-antichamber leading into the chapel, which replicates at a smaller scale most of the basic configuration of the chapel itself, including the parts of the latter's plan encompassing the apse, congregation, and side stage (fig. 50). This hallway branches off to the left from the building's foyer, taking the user down a gentle staircase that leads to the double chapel doors, which are set back within a deep stone frame on the left side of the landing. This excavation enables the threshold into the chapel space, which has been sunk a half story into the ground so as to provide for a generous ceiling height without having to inflate the exterior mass. Rythmically punctuating the descent are decorative lamps that emit radiant light patterns against the green hue of the walls. While the metaphor of womb that Funo uses to describe this procession into the chapel may be apt, it is also prankishly undercut by the outline of male genitalia that the hallway helps to trace out in plan as its phallic end, with a single thickly framed light-crowned door marking the urethral tip.[76] This would-be climax to which the hallway seems to concentrate its terminal focus, whether read sexually or devotionally, turns out to be a ruse, however: raised above the floor, framed

[75]See the chapter "Perception and Movement" for a discussion on the play of scale in the NOA building. The architect Hiromi Fujii drew a negative assessment of the Santa Chiara building, which he thought was "less successful in creating a sense of balance and unity" compared with the NOA building, contending that in this project "the disparate remains unharmonized." However, it is precisely around this instability that the architectural statement of the building inheres. See Hiromi Fujii, "Centrifugal Space," *JA* 50, no.3 (March 1975): 43.

[76]Yūki, "Nusumi enu," 76. The phallic imagery also overlays onto the apse under the congruence noted previously between the plans of the hallway and the chapel.

by thick stone casing, and showered with incandescence in a mirroring of the chapel's apse, the niche-like door merely serves as the access into a small storage room, while deferring the real climax to the ingress through the chapel portal that finally comes into view on the left.

This architectural drama has a scatological counterpart in the two-story gallery that lies at the opposite end of the extended foyer space. Surrounded by seminar rooms and a principal's room (now used as a staff room), the gallery sits at the innermost core of the hexagonal plan and is bounded on the eastern and northern sides by a curved wall that traces out the scrotal segment of the genitalic figure in the plan. A central circular opening, two metres wide and massively ringed in stone, has been punched out of the floor that separates the gallery's first and second stories and provides a bit of airiness to an otherwise somber space. On the second floor, which can be reached by an open stairway to the right of the building's entrance, this orifice is circumscribed by a tubular guardrail which is wrapped in a black leather bound so tightly and meticulously that its seam is undetectable (fig. 51). In a spectacle charged with psychoanalytic content, the anal retentiveness of the craft converges here with the very image of the anus not only through form and material but also in the location of the orifice as a dimly lit threshold to the more private areas of the building that surround it.

What is perhaps unexpected after the sequence of spatial contraction up into the gallery's second floor is the sensation of dilation and release that one experiences upon entry into the adjacent women's restroom (fig. 52).The restroom's generous space is comparable in area to that of the entire gallery footprint and

is flooded with natural southern light that enters through both a floor-to-ceiling glass pane in the sink area and a large metal-framed window that spans the entire width between the two rows of toilet stalls. It was because Shirai had felt the responsibility to provide a healthy environment for young female students that he rejected the conventional practice of relegating the restroom to a dark left-over space, in counterposition to the romantic aestheticization of dimness and dissatisfaction with modern sanitary ware that Jun'ichiro Tanizaki expressed in his widely read essay *In Praise of Shadows*.[77] This gesture, in its play of inversions juxtaposing dark and light, public and private, and scatological metaphor and bodily function within the context of everyday activity, ultimately serves the dialectical end of elevating the routine into an event, returning us once again, in dramatic fashion, to the paradoxes of the picturesque and its programmed choreographies of discovery, and to the fundamental dilemmas that confront modern architecture in its engagement with the problems of reality and representation and of repetition and singularity.[78]

NOA and the Erotics of Interior and Exterior

In the NOA building, also completed in 1974, the interlocking bipartite scheme of Santa Chiara is reprised but in a vertical instead of horizontal organization (fig.

[77]Women historically made up the majority of student body at Ibaraki University. For a short statement by Shirai on the project, see Seiichi Shirai, "Santa kiara kan" サンタキアラ館, *Musō* (Tokyo: Shōbunsha, 2010), 42-43.

[78]This tension between repetition and singularity also relates to the theme of aestheticizing routinized actions, which we saw unfold in a different way in Shirai's calligraphic practice. See the chapter "Perception and Movement."

28). In this way, the coital symbolism becomes graphically explicit in the building's overall form, turning NOA into a spectacle in which the themes of sexuality and eroticism are most viscerally and intensely elaborated among Shirai's works and in which the binarity of male and female is both asserted and subverted through concerted architectural means.

The frequently made comparison of NOA to a dōsojin deity compels one to interpret the building as a symbol of sublime masculine virility through its stark silhouette and the sexual connotations of a smooth elliptical tower penetrating a much wider brick-clad base, an impression which is affirmed by the phallic figurine in the exterior wall (fig. 18). At the same time, the shaft also recalls a lipstick or precious jewelry case in its fine detailing, mounted gold lettering, and the delicacy with which a horizontal band of windows cuts the shaft into two pieces, leaving an impression that is closer to the feeling of the beautiful in the Burkean sense. Moreover the hand-chiseled red bricks together form a rotund mass that suggests a flocculent softness, again challenging Burke's association of roughness with the sublime and smoothness with the beautiful.[79]

The erotics of interior and exterior that play out in NOA's entrance passage are not merely enacted through effects of illumination or etched into the envelope and plan as in Santa Chiara but are dynamic and integrated in material, space, and time. The procession into the building begins with a slender archway

[79]See the chapter "Perception and Movement" for a more detailed discussion on the NOA building and in particular on the effect its logo has on how the building is perceived. I have not come across any evidence that Shirai was aware of Edmund Burke's discussion on the beautiful and the sublime. Shirai was an avid reader of Kant, however.

of monumental height and crisp outline that has been carved out of the brick base at the centre of the frontal facade. Beyond the archway threshold, a set of stairs ascends up into a tall cavity clad in black Brasilian granite whose convexity produces single shard of exterior light through a concentration of reflections (fig. 53). Light is also diffused into the cavity from above by translucent onyx panels in the ceiling. Once inside this enigmatic space, at once contractive and expansive, and unsettling in its public exposure, one is directed to either side to continue the passage into the building. In a dramatic change of scene that further segments the sequence into the interior, one is channelled through a smaller archway and into a curved passageway which again imparts a sense of compression and expansion in scale but this time, in a jarring phenomenological reversal, through oversized grey granite wall panels and a relatively low ceiling (fig. 54). The black granite of the cavity, which mostly absorbs the blinding exterior light, moreover gives way here to a white floor carpet that leads around the curve to the entrance door, abruptly inverting the extreme contrast between light emittance and absorption. While this Fallopian passageway remains exposed to the outside air, the generous thickness of the carpet enhances the feeling of interiority. These contradictions have an arresting and defamiliarizing effect on the observer, causing a disorientation that draws out one's experience in time and thwarts a technical understanding of the work. At the same time, the material and spatial theatrics of the entrance procession can also be seen as an ironic cross-wiring between traditional Western and Japanese ideas concerning the relation between enclosure and construction techniques: Shirai took the quality of blurring between inside

and outside in traditional Japanese beam and pillar construction and invested it in masonry architecture, which is naturally predisposed to distinguish the two through the priority it gives to the wall.

NOA and the Column

At a more abstract symbolic level, the elliptic cylindrical form of NOA stages in a newly emphatic way the motif of column that recurs across Shirai's large-scale works. Shirai invariably employed the column, usually fluted and without base or capital, as a spatial marker at once symbolically suggestive and uncannily alien in its presence as an architectural nonsequitur.[80] It appears in earlier projects like the Temple of Atomic Catastrophes and the former Ogachi Public Office (1956), where it can be found in pairs. In later works such as Santa Chiara, and, most emphatically, the NOA building and the Shoto and Serizawa Keisuke museums, these pairings became discontinued in favour of a symbolically more provocative and ambiguous deployment in strategically placed singletons that become integrated in ever more coordinated and sophisticated ways into Shirai's conception of the architectural promenade.[81] In its role as a kind of garden folly, the column's signaling of its own existence can be seen to align with the inversive logic of presence and absence. In the Santa Chiara building, for example, the visitor entering the chapel is immediately greeted by a generously sized fluted

[80]In his insightful interpretation of Shirai's works, Yūichirō Kōjiro cast the introduction of columns as a Surrealist tactic. See Shirai and Kōjiro, "Taidan, girishano hashira," 67.

[81]See the chapter "Perception and Movement" for a discussion on NOA and the architectural promenade that unfolds around it. The case of the Serizawa Keisuke Museum will be discussed later in this chapter.

column positioned to the right a few short steps from the entrance, far enough to permit a path into the chapel but close enough to pose a physical obstacle and to obstruct a full view of the hall. It is this combination of the inherent sexual imagery and the immediate physical entanglement with the stroller that makes the column a highly effective architectural device that has the power to arrest and fascinate.

In the case of NOA, where the column has been priapically distended in a spectacular transmogrification of scale to become identical with the building itself, calling to mind Adolf Loos's Chicago Tribune Tower proposal, the marker function seems to have metamorphosized into pure figuration, an obscene materialization of Lacan's "pure signifier" that cannot but signal its own castrative absence, an absence which itself has been inscribed into the brick-clad base of the structure, in a kind of negational mise-en-abyme, by a single column-shaped window-slit (fig. 55). However, in congruence with the jizō or more sexually explicit dōsojin roadside figure-statues that the building is clearly intended to evoke but at an exploded scale, this marker function is only reconfirmed within the broader context of the surrounding urban landscape, which Shirai exploits in the construction of an architectural experience pulsating between the centripetal and centrifugal that can be seen as turning the classical typology of the picturesque garden inside out.[82] The attraction-repulsion in the urban stroller's psycho-spatial interaction with the building's intense premonitory expression of solemnity and alienness is schematized in the directional tension created by the

[82] Again, see the chapter "Perception and Movement" for a more detailed discussion.

vertical stretching of the grid pattern of the cladding panels on the shaft, the horizontal lines tracing out the elliptical cross section and the vertical lines emphasizing, flute-like, the building's height. Here Shirai's two column motifs, the fluted spatial marker that engages the individual in its symbolic suggestiveness and the elliptical cylinder that functions more subliminally through subtle perspective and scale effects, become climatically fused in an obscene celebration of presence.

This disturbance in the relationship between part and whole, in which a single structural component has become iconically reproduced in the global form of the building, is reminiscent of the fundamental shift that marked the emergence of landscape painting as a legitimate and fully-fledged genre in the work of Albrecht Altdorfer, who elevated the depiction of nature beyond its erstwhile accessory role while underplaying or eliminating religious subject matter in an act that Christopher S. Wood has argued to be an allegory of iconoclasm in the age of the Protestant Reformation.[83] In his analysis, Wood relies on Jacques Derrida's notion of supplement, which he describes as "an amphibious entity that presents itself as a superfluity, a gratuitous excess, and yet whose very existence reveals a deficiency or lack in the object it supplements."[84] In fact the column, or more precisely the colonnade that might surround a magnificent building, is one of Kant's original examples illustrating the notion of *parergon* as that which "does not belong to the whole presentation of the object as an intrinsic constituent, but

[83]Christopher S. Wood, *Albrecht Altdorfer and the Origins of Landscape* (London: Reaction Books, 2014), 333

[84]Ibid., 64

[is] only an extrinsic addition," in a commentary in the *Critique of Judgment* that Derrida critically dissects in developing his own theory of the supplement.[85] In the manner in which Wood reads Altdorfer's landscape, the iconization of columnar form in NOA and the reinvestment in the decorative and the figurative that this necessarily compelled act to disrupt the centre-versus-margin hierarchy that is implicit in Kant's description of his colonnades as parergonal, in what can be seen as a form of protest against contemporaneous practices of modern architecture in Japan.[86] The sculptural form and surface treatment of NOA's mass obscures the function of the interior space in a way that accords with the customary conception of the column as a solid object. The golden lettering of the building's moniker, prominently affixed to the blackened bronze-clad shaft, also fails to disclose the program, while at the same time conferring a sense of jewelry-like luxury that counteracts the impression of monumentality traditionally associated with the use of the classical column. In its iconoclastic iconization, NOA stages a direct challenge to the doctrine of transparency, in all of its literal and metaphorical senses, that had come to underwrite official modernism.

Negative Column of The Shoto Art Museum

NOA's formidable affirmation of presence would be radically negated in Shirai's penultimate project, the Shoto Museum of Art in the neighbouring ward of Shibuya in Tokyo (fig. 56). Here the architect recapitulates the monocolumnar

[85]Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar, (Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987), 72.
[86]Wood, *Albrecht Altdorfer*, 71.

theme but through a dramatic act of invagination in which the elliptic cylinder of NOA's shaft is folded inward to become a void of the same shape at the centre of the building (fig. 57). The wall bounding this four-story roofless atrium at the centre of the museum is punctuated by fluted pillars that form a kind of an inverted monopteros but at the same time suggest, in a play of shifting scales, the fluting of a single giant column that one might imagine filling the entire cavity. While NOA's aggressively assertive monocolumn elicits and even demands the engagement of the stroller as part of an urban picturesque, its negative counterpart in the Shoto Museum remains hidden from public consciousness, a circumscribed space to which even physical access is forbidden except for a narrow tapered bridge that spans across the minor axis of the ellipse. It is onto this bridge that the visitor is eventually ejected when following a straight path through the entrance and into the building, leaving them suddenly suspended over the lowermost two stories of the void, which have been dug out so as to create a light well for the basement floors, and the pond at the very bottom, which sprays thin streams of water as a suggestively erotic fountain feature (fig. 57). This sexual imagery is confirmed by the plan, which reveals the building's conception as the womb of a female body (fig. 59).

The gendered dynamic on aggressive exhibition in NOA has been turned on its head, with a methodical rigour, through a one-by-one transposition of the genital symbols at play. NOA's single window-slit, a supplementary feature which is overpowered by the phallic profile of the building but at the same time reproduces this profile en abyme in its columnar outline, has been fleshed out and

amplified into the uterine form of the museum building. The phallus itself has been subsumed within as a void, a kind of negative after-image whose emptiness is paradoxically intensified by the rich decorative treatment of the elliptical wall that traces its contour. This self-contained system of sexuated inversions that comprise NOA and Shoto together as a couplet recalls the juxtapositional alternations that interanimate the twin buildings of the Shinwa Bank headquarters but with a heightened degree of intensity and volatility in the architectural communication of symbolic and political meaning. Extreme shifts in scale, material treatment, and geographic displacement now work to destabilize or subvert the terms of the system themselves as they appear in various guises through the dichotomies of form versus content, material versus space, structure versus void, existence versus ground, and core versus supplement.

Despite this matrix of dualities that locks the architecture of the museum into a tight conceptual relationship with NOA, the carving out of the column-void was in fact a practical response to programmatic concerns within the constraints of a tight site within an urban residential neighbourhood with strict height limits. Shirai writes,

> According to the city office's document, a minimum space of 600 tsubo was required, with a maximum building height of ten meters above the ground.[87] It was necessary then to create a two-story basement. If the basement were to be created in the usual manner, then it would be a poky space. Moreover, because the site is surrounded by urban area, one needed to pay unusual attention to the placement of the windows. I came up with this plan in trying to bring in the outside space to the

[87] 600 tsubo is about 2000 square meters.

> interior, with minimal windows but incorporating light and air in the organization of the building. A plan composed of a combination of square units would have a large part under shadow. Also because the land is not straight but rather an irregular trapezoid, I used this egg-shaped ellipse as the basis for form generation, thinking of the spatial effects on the interior and exterior. The exterior space is also very tight, so I tried to make the front court generous by pulling the frontal facade inwards into a curve shape. [88]

Just as with the NOA building, whose overall shape Shirai claimed was determined by the program and regulations, the Shoto Museum's formal scheme should be understood first and foremost as a solution to the pragmatic issues posed by the project and its siting, and not purely as the conceit of a private fantasy detached from reality. Nevertheless, it is the surplus that resides in the gap between idea and the realization of form that has come to define the symbolic imagination of the building, with the central void marking an apogee in the development of the architect's conception of the column from its simple structural role in the earliest projects to its singleton use as a symbolic marker in Santa Chiara and its later iconic transmogrification in NOA.[89]

Ellipses

The elliptical shape that is common to the positive and negative columnar forms of NOA and Shoto becomes in the latter a basic motif that is reproduced in

[88]Seiichi Shirai, "Shōtō bijutsukan: shiraiseiichi sensei ni kiku" 松濤美術館: 白井晟一先生に聞く, interview by the editorial board, in En'ya, ed., *Shirai Seiichi kenkyū III* 白井晟一研究 III (Tokyo: Nanyōdō, 1981), 93-94.

[89]See the essay "Perception and Movement" for Shirai's statement about how he arrived at the general form of the NOA building according to site regulations and programmatic requirements.

other parts of the building, from the northern window on the first floor and the golden frames of the hallway mirrors to the contour of the frontal facade and its canopy, and even extending to the free-standing sign post designed by the architect that slightly and slyly deviates from the pattern in its subtle flattening of the curvature along the axes. Even the more minor of these ellipses and their variously deformed variants that propagate throughout the building produce spatial and visceral effects beyond their simple diagrammatic function of maintaining a consistency in formal vocabulary. The spherical shell of the exterior wall fountain, perhaps the one place where the ellipse has been completely regularized into an isotropic form, is a provocative distraction from the entryway that, in its telescoping condensation of visual scales from the museum's unusual canopy roof right down to the erotic details of the faucet, serves to circulate the visitor around the interior of the courtyard wall into which it is ensconced (fig. 56). In the entrance hall, a capsule-shaped ticket office window compels one into its womblike embrace but at the same time interposes a disturbing psychological distance between the transactional parties through its material thickness. Most dramatic in its spatial tension, however, is the negative column void at the centre of the museum, which ostensibly sets up an expansive experience in its ejection of the museum visitor onto an open-air bridge spanning the gap but at the same time counteracts this with an acute sense of compression in the foreshortening effect of the minor axis and the narrowing of the bridge towards its centre. The experiences articulated by all of these elliptical figures together stage a continuous architectural promenade, alternating between outside and inside, that begins with

the approach to the museum and culminates, after the bridging of the void, in the discharge through a short arched tunnel onto a balcony-hallway overlooking the exhibition space, itself a large and slightly distorted elliptical lune in plan.[90]

The ellipse is in fact a recurrent theme throughout Shirai's work and has invited many critics and historians to speculate on its significance, most notably Isozaki, who made a connection to Baroque art and architecture in the embodied use of the oscillatory dynamism of this figure in Shirai's later phase.[91] For Isozaki, it is with this "Baroque" period, beginning with the Kaishōkan tower, that a certain coherency takes hold in Shirai's architecture, in which there is an attempt "to construct a sense of grand unity by organizing everything under the pull of an attractive force towards an ultimate [vanishing] point."[92] Isozaki explains that, in contrast to Shirai's earlier fragmentary compositions of unrelated events, the point of view of the perceiver is now taken into account, creating as it were a dialogue between the two poles of earth and God, as illustrated in the anamorphic effect of the ocular elliptical window of Kaishōkan, which appears as a circle from the ground.[93] However, as I have in essence argued elsewhere, and as NOA and the Shoto museum illustrate in mature form, this architectural sub-

[90]In the original plan, the final climax was to be a more dramatic final descent into the exhibition room via a pair of open staircases that wrap back around the column-void. In the realized building, the visitor has to circle farther back along the balcony and descend through an enclosed stairwell. For the original plan, see "From architectural plans to opening," accessed April 20, 2019, `https://shoto-museum.jp/en/aboutthemuseum/project/`.

[91]For example, the ellipse appears as the cross-sectional form of the columns at the Matsuida town hall and of the vertical core of the first phase of the Shinwa Bank headquarters, as well as in the shape of the window over the massive entryway of the computer tower Kaishōkan.

[92]Isozaki, "Hasai shita danpen," 81.

[93]Ibid., 82.

lime is subsumed into a grander and more versatile principle of the programmed picturesque that had been gestating since the mid-1950s and encompasses such projects as the Kankodō bookstore and the Ōhato branch of the Shinwa Bank that Isozaki would place in what he calls Shirai's Mannerist phase, in which independent and recalcitrant fragments are forced together into a frictive bricolage.[94]

It is also instructive to compare Shirai's ellipse motif with the circle form that recurs among the contemporaneous works of architects associated with the Metabolist movement, from the capsule windows of Kishō Kurokawa's Nakagin Tower and the circular arrangement of Kiyonori Kikutake's cylindrical Marine City towers to the cylindrical cores of Kenzo Tange's Shizuoka Press and Broadcasting Center and Yamanashi Broadcasting and Press Center. In these projects, the circle functions as both a token and instrument of rational organization suitable for the efficient generation of architectural form at immense scales of production, land use, and circulation. For Shirai the ellipse was critical, in both symbolic and spatially operative ways, for creating a dynamic of constantly shifting scales of perception and bodily experience, for precipitating movement instead of managing it.

The Shizuoka City Serizawa Keisuke Art Museum

In the Serizawa Keisuke Museum, the blurring of interior and exterior is intimately bound up with the production of a kind of picturesque landscape that

[94]See the essay "Perception and Movement" for a discussion of the picturesque and the sublime in relation to NOA and its use of text.

structures one's experience of the building. The museum is organized as a promenade that begins well outside the property. Leading up to the entrance is a labyrinthine sequence of picturesque events inflected by three layers of stone walling, two of which the visitor must physically penetrate (fig. 41). At a key point in the sequence, in a two-metre-wide gap within the third layer of stone, a diminutive yet noble kantsubaki tree teases the visitor by strategically obstructing the only exterior view into the expansive pool of the inner courtyard with its magnificent central fountain. The use of the tree in this game of hide-and-seek is reminiscent of a similar trick at the entrance of the renowned strolling gardens of the Katsura Imperial Villa and clearly establishes the importance of Japanese cultural practices in Shirai's conception of the museum. A cascading water feature within the stone wall opposite the entrance door further helps to coordinate this program of circulation and delay, much like the exterior fountains at the Shoto Museum and the Kankodō bookstore, and similarly carries some symbolic weight in its evocation of the cleansing rituals of Shintoism and the tea ceremony (fig. 60).

Inside the building, it is in the main exhibition room facing onto the opposite side of the courtyard from the kantsubaki tree that the picturesque landscape is represented and its function enacted most vividly. In the original proposal, this room was conceived as an extension of the courtyard. The two shared a masonry floor that contrasted with the carpet in the adjacent rooms, and they were connected through floor-to-ceiling windows not unlike the ones at the Kōzanji temple which rhythmically frame the scenery of the surrounding area (fig. 61). In re-

sponse to the client's wishes, Shirai settled in the end on two smaller arch-shaped windows and the same interior flooring as in the adjacent rooms. However, the overall C shape for the interior organization survived against the client's preference for a common entrance and exit, which would have radically altered the exterior scenographic procession.[95] In insisting on his original design concept, Shirai wrote that a museum such as this "should be a place where the seeing subject can engage through locomotion in a free dialogue with what is implied in space, with its body responding to the experience of changes in luminosity, variations in height, and modulations in the width of space."

At a cruder representational level, one can easily recognize allusions to the historical picturesque in the pavilion-like structure within the wall of room D opposite the courtyard and the solitary medieval-type column with primitive ionic capital standing nearby (fig. 63). Moreover, the mantel of the fireplace along another wall injects a Gothic character, reinforcing the castle-like atmosphere already established in the exterior approach. The contributions of these elements to the picturesque experience, however, goes far beyond their static presence as symbols. The ways in which they manipulate the visitor's perception and precipitate movement stimulate the kind of spatial engagement that Shirai envisioned.

The function of the column is twofold. It first of all marks the intersection point of two orthogonal strips of stone that are embedded in the floor and span the entire length of the room in either direction. These two axes are not, however, an alignment device intended to extrapolate an existing symmetry as a Baroque

[95] En'ya, *Sekisuikan*, 36

garden typically does in relation to its main structure. Instead, they are both positioned off-centre so that the three-dimensional Cartesian coordinate system that they and the column establish becomes disengaged from the natural perspectival frame of the room, suggesting a Mondrian-like extension of space towards infinity (fig. 64). This has the consequence of accentuating the apparent arbitrariness with which the archways, fireplace, and windows have been distributed in relation to the column and each other.

Upon traversing the space, however, one realizes that this distribution has in fact been carefully calculated to produce certain effects. The column, positioned so as to partially block the pavilion from one's line of sight at the entrance to the room, commands a brief but arresting moment of distraction that sets the stage for further discovery. As the pavilion emerges into full view, it appears as a visual focal point framed by its surroundings, as in a picturesque garden, but at the same time this function is dramatically turned inside out as the pavilion transmutes into a three-dimensional framing instrument that redirects the sightline through a gap between its columns, teasingly exposing not only an adjacent room but also the disconcertingly sunken archway beyond that leads into the most elaborately designed space of the museum, a towering octagonal room with rusticated walls and a polished black granite floor.[96]

These spatial dynamics are at the same time in conflict with the Japanese tea room aesthetic imparted by the greyness of the carpet, the beige of the wall, and

[96]Unfortunately, the opening onto the adjacent room has been closed, so that the pavilion no longer functions as a monocular.

the grid of the ceiling. While the fireplace mantel evokes images of a Renaissance chateau, the authoritative frontality of its display-case-like architecture and relation to the delicate neighbouring archway suggest a tokonoma, the recessed space of a tea room where a scroll painting or flowers might be exhibited for the guests' enjoyment.[97] Moreover, the single and somewhat alien stone column, in marking a distinguished position in the room, plays the role of a tokobashira, the wooden post which helps to frame the tokonoma and in which the carpenter's artistic ambition is most prominently expressed. Even the procession into the museum and towards this room recalls the tea ceremony sequence, which in its most elaborate form begins outside and includes an obligatory promenade in the garden, a waiting period in a shelter, and a washing of hands. Nevertheless, this space at the heart of the building completely lacks the qualities of contraction, serenity, and dimness characteristically associated with the tea room and thus reverses the interior atmosphere that one anticipates at the culmination of a tea ceremony sequence.

The inversion of interior and exterior in the Shizuoka museum was a conscious strategy towards participation in what Shirai saw as an evolutionary process whose further progress was now premised on the inextricable link that had developed between Japanese architecture and global practices. At Shizuoka the spatial choreography of the picturesque landscape garden has been brought deep inside the building and integrated with various elements from the tea room to

[97] According to Katagi Atsushi, Shirai did indeed think of the mantel piece as a tokonoma ("mitate"). See also Hato, "Shōwaki kenchikuka," 55.

produce unfamiliar sensations and aggregate meanings. The disparate references reflect Shirai's composite identity in their linkage of past and present and reinvigorate the active engagement of the modern subject.

Shirai's special attention to the restroom in Santa Chiara is reprised at the Serizawa Keisuke Museum, where a sophisticated psychological game is played out across the reflective surfaces of the windows embedded into the stone wall. Located at a corner of the museum's property within its perimeter wall but disconnected from the main interior space of the museum while sharing a common roof, the restrooms prolong the picturesque promenade as a coda to the museum itinerary. The women's restroom begins with a hallway segment containing two washbasins along its side and bends into an L-shape around into the stall area. At the end of the initial hallway, directly in the line of vision from the entrance door, a tall vertical window draws in natural light from one side and the user from the other in a telescopic play that brings into view the museum's entrance path, completing the circuit but only virtually, at one visual remove in a brief moment of surveillance that simulates the authorial eye of the architect himself (fig. 65). The simple abrupt change in luminosity at Santa Chiara is traded here for a more dynamically visual choreography whose psychological charge is even further intensified on the men's side. In the latter case, a similar tall vertical window faces outward as a a singular elevational feature in a long stretch of the outermost perimeter wall that is otherwise lacking any architectural detail, inviting interaction with those walking along the bordering path in the adjacent public park (fig. 66). The window is placed high enough so that the exterior observer does not see

their image in the reflection, only the trees behind their back. Interior and exterior thus merge in the sylvan vignette that is shared by observers on both sides of the glass, with one observer's upward contemplative gaze unwittingly rousing the other's self-consciousness in the act of discharging a vital bodily function.

The importance that Shirai accorded to restroom space as a fundamental element of the architectural conception can be viewed in conjunction with his bold use of erotic forms as an attempt to bring into the open various taboo aspects of human physiology that form part of everyday life, to avoid a marginalization of behaviour that engenders places of exception. Here we see an expression of Shirai's belief that the source of beauty is to be found in routine activity and use, a theme which he articulated in a number of essays, often through the concept of "yu" in the Confucian dichotomy "tai-yu." If the brothel is an example of Michel Foucault's heterotopias of deviation, which lie outside the normal symbolic order, then Shirai's architecture attempts a reintegration of illicit sensuality into this order, providing a kind of public transparency to private fantasy. It is an act that disturbs the propriety of the orthodox variety of modern architecture which largely represses the carnal in its drive for clarity and transparency of a more literal kind. It is especially interesting in the context of Shirai's distaste for the modern sukiya and points to a complex genealogy of ideas and attitudes that calls for further investigation into the history of gender roles and the conceptions of private and public in Japanese society.

4. CONCLUSION: RETURN OF THE SYMBOLIC, REVERSION TO REALITY

In his apparently atavistic reinvestment in the symbolic, Shirai has often been viewed on the one hand as an anti-modernist who resisted the latest technological and economic advances in building construction and on the other as a harbinger of postmodernism.[1] Critical commentary by Honda and others in the 1970s came to acknowledge however the semiotic disjointedness and semantic ambiguity in Shirai's practice. Honda writes for example that "only the symbol at the level of semiotics is presented" in an "incomplete expression that lacks conclusiveness at the level of semantics." Echoing such conclusions in a 1989 conversation, the architect Kishō Kurokawa hints at the problematic nature of the historical and theoretical positioning of Shirai's architecture within the standard frameworks that narrate the modern and the postmodern and the transition between them:

> If we were to interpret Shirai's work in some form or another, I think that it is architecture that cannot be deciphered in semiotic terms. I think it would be interesting to thoroughly debate this problem within the context of postmodernism.[2]

[1] Kō Miyauchi writes, for example, that "Shirai's mysterious and uncanny material mass is an indictment in flesh of modern technology and systems," while the journalist Tatsuo Iso opens his guide to postmodern architecture with Shirai's Kaishōkan tower at Sasebo as an early example from the "exploratory period" between 1975 and 1982. Kō Miyauchi 宮内康, *Enkon no yūtopia: Miyauchi ko no iru basho* 怨恨のユートピア: 宮内康の居る場所 (Tokyo : Renga shobō shinsha, 2000), 120. Tatsuo Iso and Hiroshi Miyasawa, *Posuto modan kenchiku junrei* ポストモダン建築巡礼, (Tokyo: Nikkei BP, 2011).

[2] Kishō Kurokawa, "Kindai kenchiku no doko ga waruika: posuto modean no kenchiku dezain o tou, isozaki arata, kurokawa kishō" 近代建築のどこが悪いか「ポストモダン」の建築デザインを問う—磯崎新・黒川紀章, in *Kurokawa kishō chosakushū dai 7 kan: kenchiku ron* 黒川紀章著作集: 建築論 volume 7 (Tokyo: Bensei shuppan, 2006), 58.

What I have indeed argued here is that this semiotic occlusion neither produces nor results from an incoherent bricolaging but rather contributes to a broader, systematically conceived architectural program. The communicative potential of the sign is constantly being interrupted, deferred, or overturned through a nexus of inversions in material, scale, luminosity, form, and texture as part of an intrinsically architectural dynamic that serves to condition the engagement of the modern subject, not so as to facilitate the integration of this subject into industrial or postindustrial society but rather to affirm individual agency as its basic prerogative. While Shirai's spatial and psychological manipulations are infused with themes in which he had a deep personal investment, from the expression of Japanese identity by way of the tea ceremony to his profuse referencing of medieval and classical European architecture and his exhibitions of eroticism, their impact is to be found not so much in the mental linkage between signified and signifier or in the web of relationships between these two but rather in the visceral reactions of a moving subject triggered by ambiguous references in often confounding spaces. Not only does the physical reality of the built structure combine with the pull of the symbolic to heighten the subject's experience, but its effects are often so powerful that it threatens to overwhelm the representational order and open up a chasm between the two. It is in these moments that Shirai's poetic intensity makes itself felt through new sensations and meanings that are not so easily conveyed in mediated or narrative accounts.

While contemporaneous literary and artistic movements may have helped to fuel the development of Shirai's strategy of inversion as it ranged from the sim-

ple expressions of contrarian ethos of his early buildings to the sophisticated interference between symbolic and phenomenological effects in NOA and other late projects, the power and originality of Shirai's work ultimately derive from an uncompromising disciplinary commitment to the possibilities afforded by the medium of architecture itself. If modern architecture is distinguished by a dialectical confrontation between reality and representation, in the words of Neil Levine, then rarely has this fundamental tension been exposed in such a conscious and unbridled way and with such singular and untransferable execution, challenging even the evolutionary terms in which Shirai framed his own architectural program.

Figure 1: Kawamura residence fireplace (photo by anonymous; reprinted from Shirai seiichi kenkyūjo, *Shirai seiichi zenshū: shashin*)

Figure 2: Arched entryway of Kankisō (photo by the author)

Figure 3: "Pavilion" in room D, Serizawa Keisuke Art Museum (photo by the author)

Figure 4: Outside faucet at Shoto Museum (photo by the author)

Figure 5: Outside faucet at Kankodō (photo by the author)

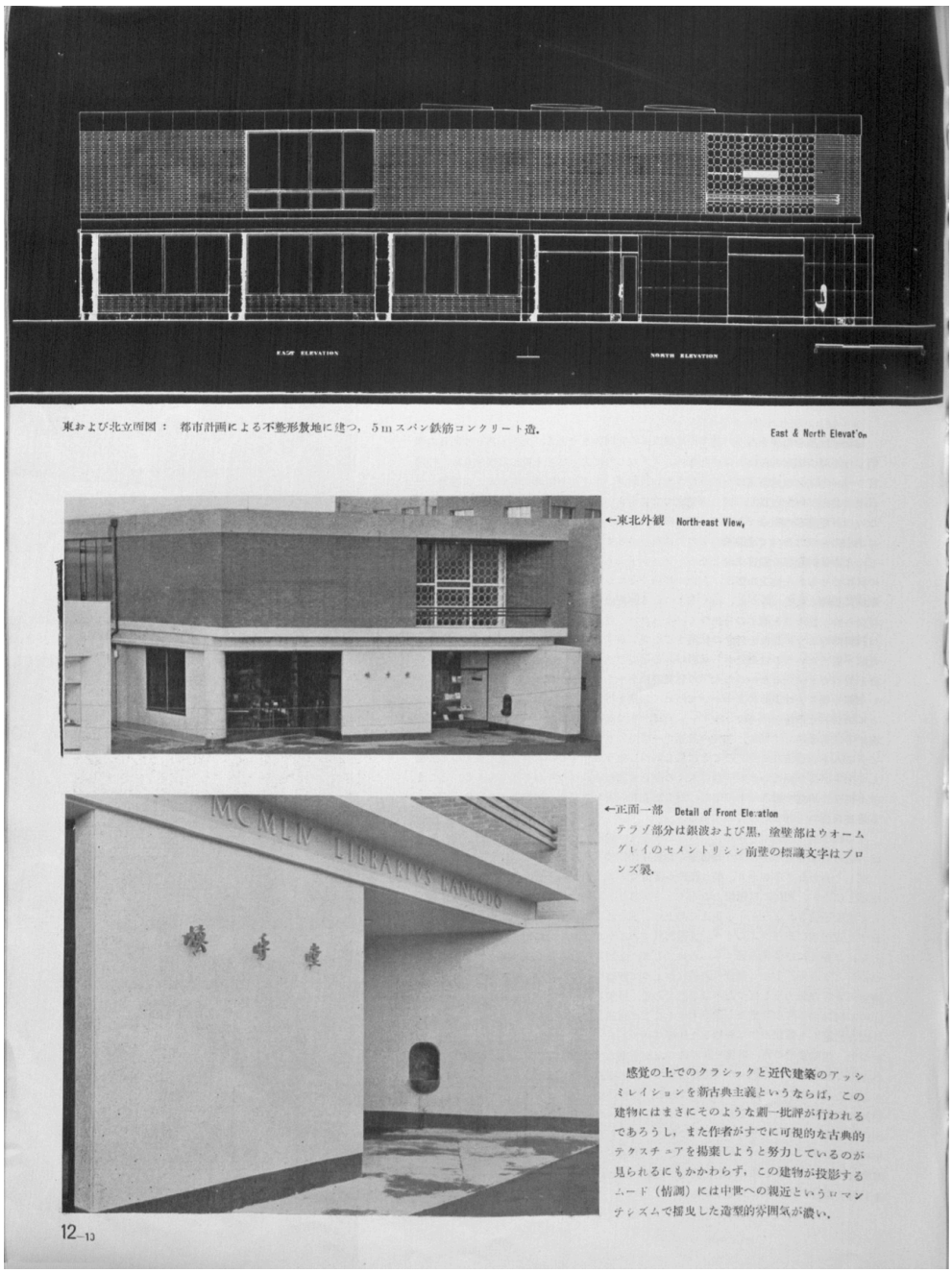


Figure 6: Page from the journal Shinkenchiku, Oct. 1954 (reprinted from "Kankodō, a Store for Culture," *Shinkenchiku* 29, no.10 (1954))

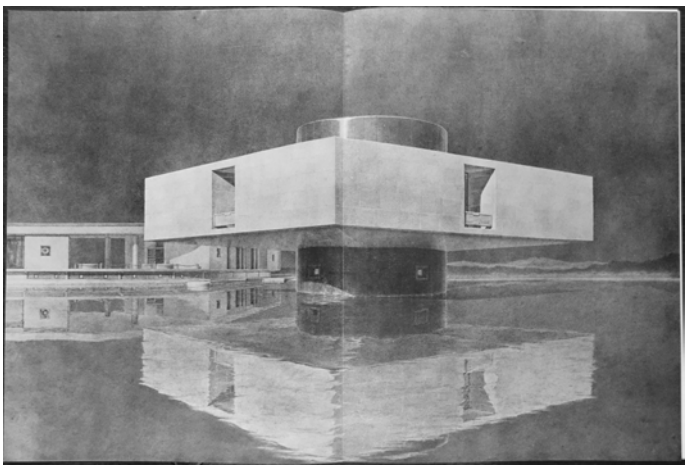


Figure 7: *Temple of Atomic Catastrophes* (Seiichi Shirai, 1955; reprinted from Seiichi Shirai, *Temple Atomic Catastorophs: Projected by Seiichi Shirai*)

Figure 8: Shizuoka City Serizawa Keisuke Art Museum (photo by Osamu Murai; reprinted from Sōroku En'ya ed., *Sekisuikan: kenchiku o utau*))

Figure 9: Chūō bunko's frontispiece

Figure 10: *Le Visage de la Paix* (Pablo Picasso, 1951, B. 687; reprinted from Pablo Picasso and Paul Eluard, *Das Antlitz des Friedens*)

Figure 11: Dove design on the cover of Chūō bunko

Figure 12: *Colombe volant (à l'arc-en-ciel)* (Pablo Picasso, 1952, B. 712; reprinted from Museum of Fine Arts Boston, `https://www.mfa.org/collections/object/dove-with-rainbow-167645`), accessed May 8, 2019)

Figure 13: Chūō shinsho's frontispiece

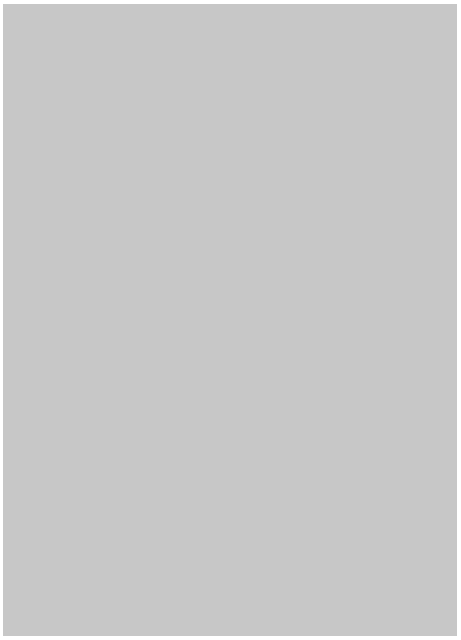


Figure 14: *War and Peace* (Pablo Picasso, 1954; reprinted from The Museum of Modern Art, `https://www.moma.org/collection/works/29902`, accessed May 31, 2018)

Figure 15: "Myoho" scroll at Kohakuan (photo by Osamu Murai; reprinted from *Shirai seiichi zenshū: shashin*)

Figure 16: Google map view showing the character "ho"

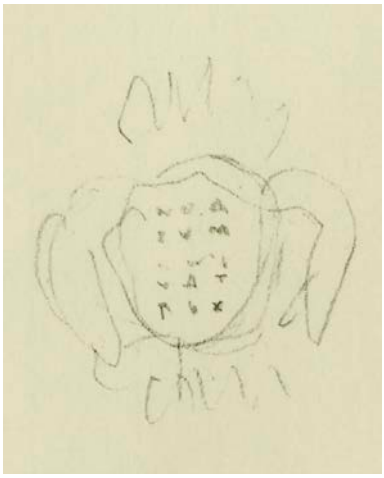


Figure 17: Sketch for the NOA building (Seiichi Shirai; reprinted from Shirai seiichi kenkyūjo, *Shirai seiichi sukecchi shu: dessin & esquisse by S. Sirai*)

Figure 18: NOA building details (photos by the author)

Figure 19: Slipcase and cover of the book *Aijo* by Fumiko Hayashi (Kaizōsha, 1936; photo by the author)

Figure 20: Slipcase and cover of the book *Roshia-Sovēto Bungakushi* by Shōichi Kimura (Chūōkōron, 1958; photo by the author)

Figure 21: Slipcover of the book *Yume no Ukibashi* by Yumiko Kurahashi (Chūōkōron, 1971; photo by the author)

Figure 22: Slipcase and cover of Kiyoshi Jinzai's book *Haiiro no me no onna* (Chūōkōron, 1957; photo by the author)

Figure 23: Cover of the book *Kura* edited by Noboru Kawazoe (Bungei shunjū, 1980; photo by the author)

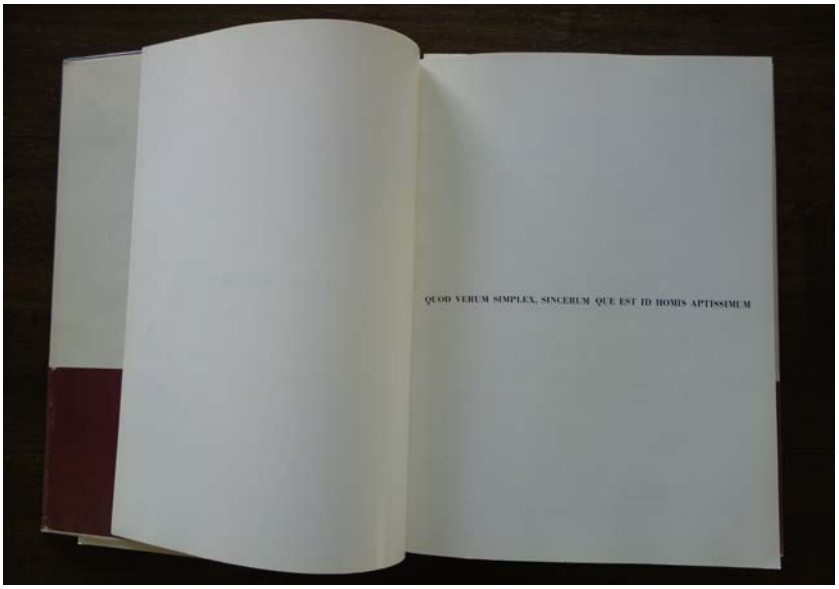


Figure 24: Page from the book *Sekisuikan: kenchiku o utau* edited by Sōroku En'ya (Kanae Shobō, 1981; photo by the author)

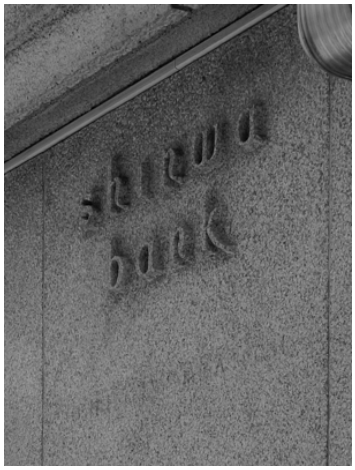


Figure 25: Ōhato branch of the Shinwa Bank, western facade (photo by the author)

Figure 26: The Ōhato brach of the Shinwa Bank, elevation (photo by the author)

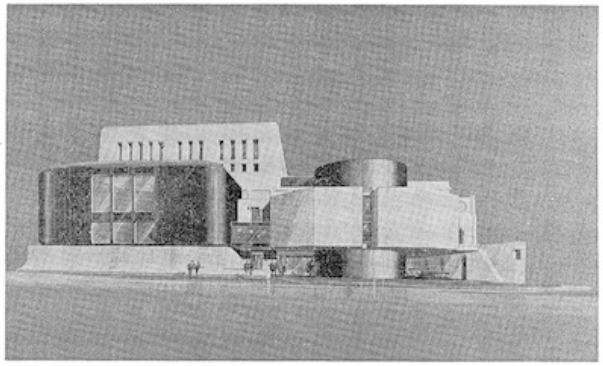
Figure 27: NOA building, details (photos by the author)

Figure 28: Page from *Kenchiku bunka*, Nov. 1974 (reprinted from "NOA Building," *Kenchiku bunka* 29, no.337 (1974))

Figure 29: NOA building, elevation (photo by the author)

Figure 30: *Kaishōkan* book by Seiichi Shirai (Chūōkōron, 1980; photo by the author)

Figure 31: Cover of the book *Kaishōkan*, detail (photo by the author)



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ため撮ることができない。これは
写生によるものである。

Figure 32: Shinwa Bank headquarters, Sasebo (reprinted from *Shinwa ginkō sanjūnen* (Shinwa ginkō, 1972))

Figure 33: Calligraphic works Sōran (喪乱) and Anan (阿難) (Seiichi Shirai; reprinted from Seiichi Shirai, *Koshikyo shojō 2* (Keishōsha, 1976))

Figure 34: Foyer of Kohakuan with the calligraphoc work "Nikkō" (photo by Osamu Murai; reprinted from Shirai seiichi kenkyūjo, *Shirai seiichi no kenchiku III: kohakuan to enbankyo* (merukumāru, 2014))

Figure 35: The Tōshōgū shrine at Nikkō (photo by the author)

Figure 36: Tsukushi residence (photo by Chuūji Hirayama; reprinted from Shirai seiichi kenkyūjo, *Shirai seiichi zenshū: shashin*)

Figure 37: Takaku Shuzō warehouse (photo by the author)

Figure 38: Rōkanseki tea room (photo by the author)

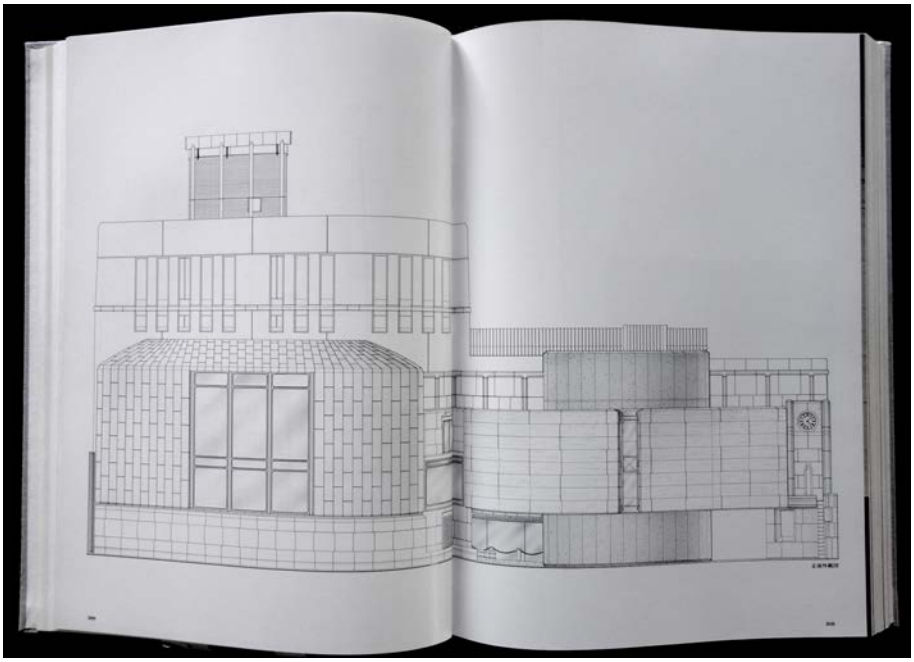

Figure 39: Shinwa Bank headquarters (reprinted from Noboru Kawazoe, *Shirai seiichi: kenchiku to sono sekai* (Sekai bunkasha, 1978))

Figure 40: Shizuoka City Serizawa Keisuke Art Museum, western view (photo by the author)

Figure 41: Shizuoka City Serizawa Keisuke Art Museum, entrance approach (photo by the author)

Figure 42: The Kagawa Prefectural Office (photo by the author)

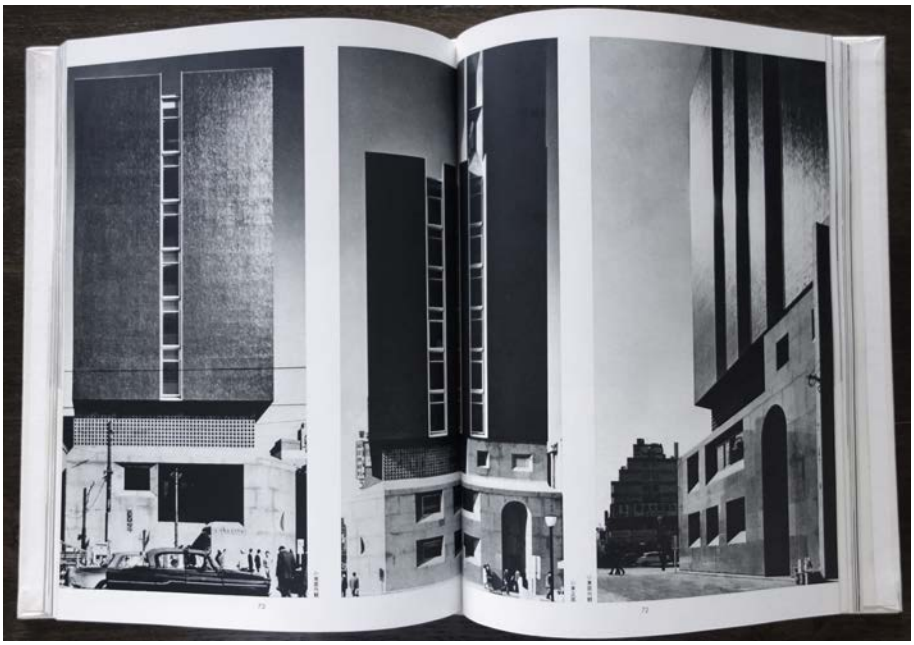

Figure 43: Shinwa Bank, Tokyo branch (photo by Osamu Murai; reprinted from Osamu Kurita, *Gendai nihon kenchikuka zenshū 9 Shirai seiichi*)

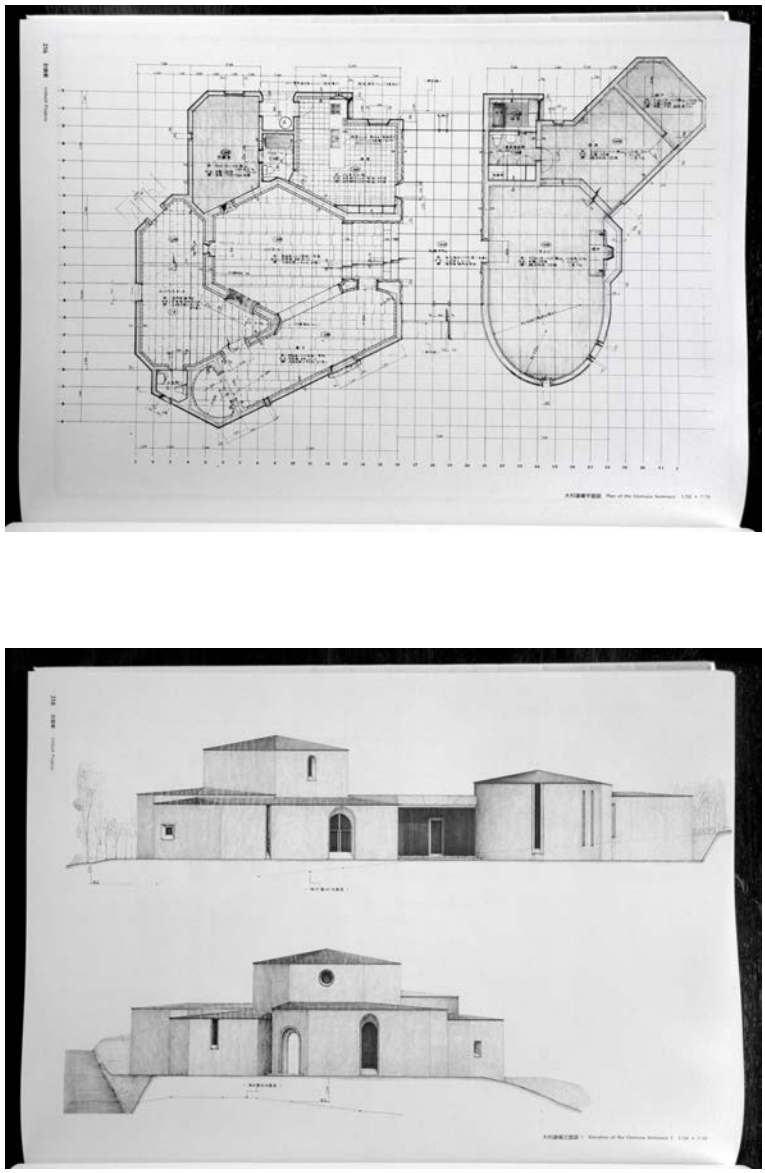

Figure 44: Ōmura Seminary Plan and Elevation (reprinted from Shirai seiichi kenkyūjo, *Shirai seiichi zenshu*)

Figure 45: Santa Chiara building, northern view (reprinted from *The Japan Architect* 50, no.3 (March, 1975): 43))

Figure 46: Santa Chiara building, western view (photo by the author)

Figure 47: Santa Chiara building, chapel (reprinted from *Kenchiku bunka* 30, no. 339 (Jan. 1975): 74)

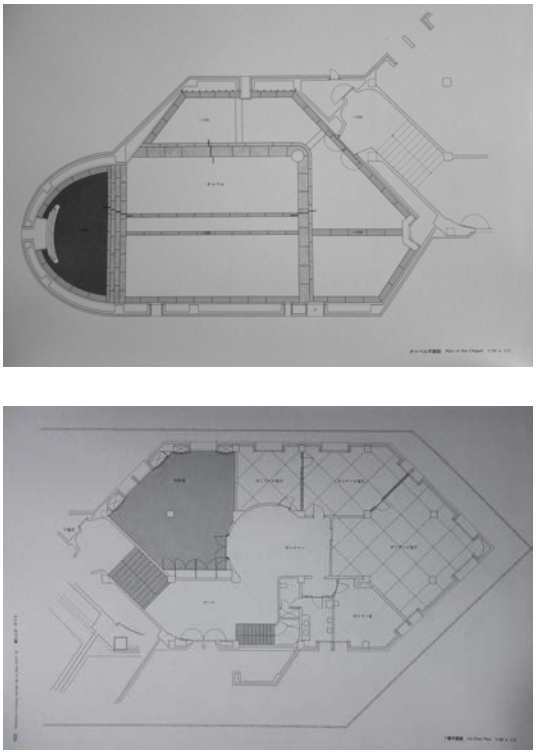

Figure 48: Santa Chiara building, plans (reprinted from Shirai seiichi kenkyūjo, *Shirai seiichi zenshu* (Dōhōsha, 1988))

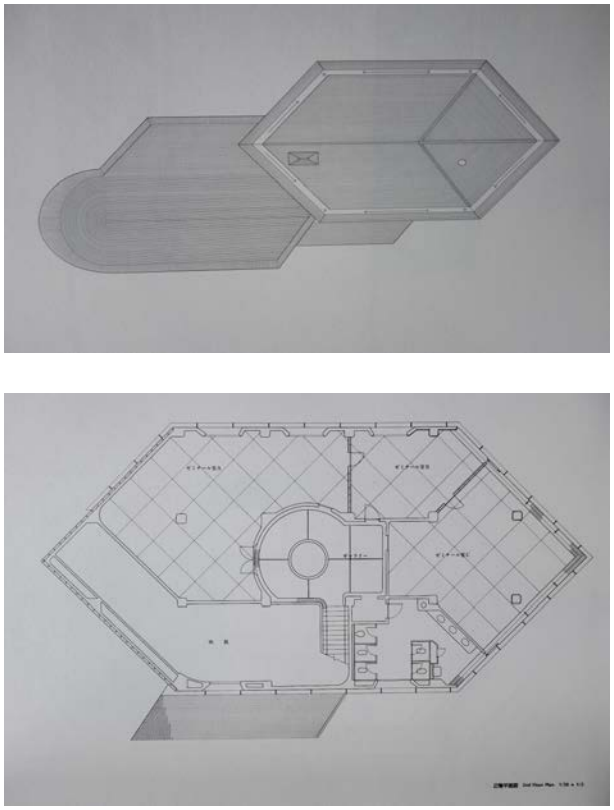

Figure 49: Santa Chiara building, plan of second floor and roof (reprinted from Shirai seiichi kenkyūjo, *Shirai seiichi zenshu* (Dōhōsha, 1988))

Figure 50: Santa Chiara building, antichamber (photo by the author)

Figure 51: Santa Chiara building, second floor (photo by the author)

Figure 52: Santa Chiara building, women's restroom (photo by the author)

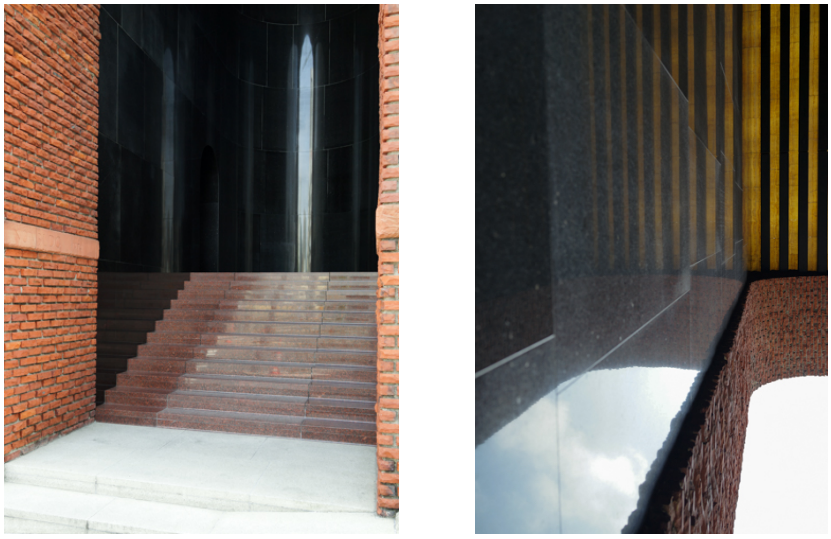

Figure 53: NOA building, entrance (photos by the author)

Figure 54: NOA building, entrance passage (photo by the author)

Figure 55: NOA building, facade detail (photos by the author)

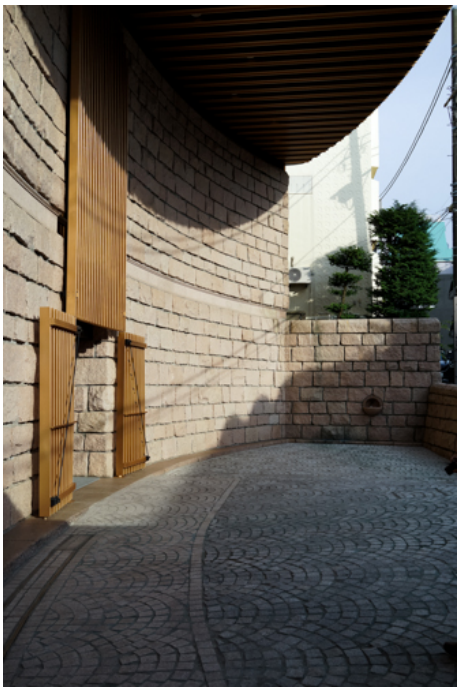

Figure 56: Shoto Museum of Art, facade (photo by the author)

Figure 57: Shoto Museum of Art, atrium (photos by the author)

Figure 58: Shoto Museum of Art, interior (photo by the author)

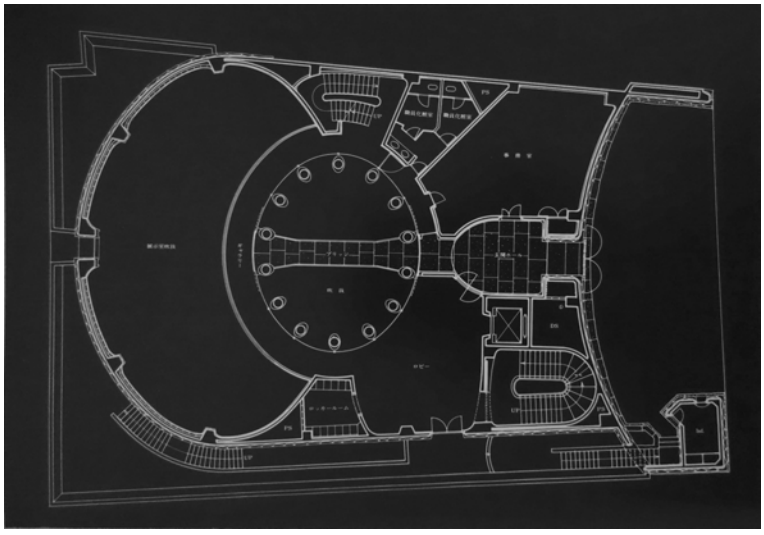

Figure 59: Shoto Museum of Art, first-floor plan (reprinted from Sōroku En'ya, ed., *Shirai seiichi kenkyū II* (Nanyōdō, 1979)

Figure 60: Shizuoka City Serizawa Keisuke Museum, with kantsuabki tree (photo by the author)

Figure 61: A view from Sekisui-in, Kōzanji, Kyoto (photo by the author)

Figure 62: Landscape at Kozanji, Kyoto (photo by the author)

Figure 63: Serizawa Keisuke Museum, exhibition room "D" (photo by Masaaki Kobayashi; reprinted from Sōroku En'ya, *Sekisuikan: kenchiku o utau*)

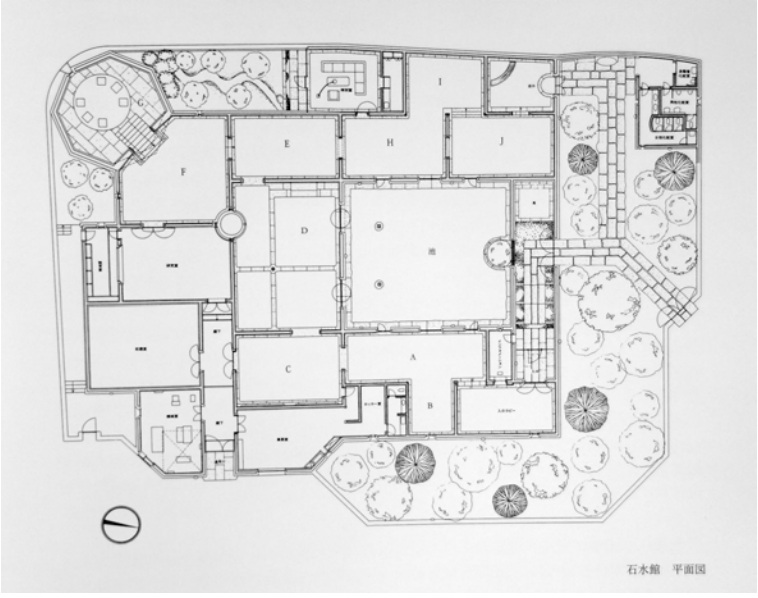

Figure 64: Serizawa Keisuke Museum, plan (reprinted from Shirai seiichi kenkyūjo, *Shirai seiichi no kenchiku II: mizu no bijutsukan* (Merukumāru, 2013))

Figure 65: View from women's restroom, Serizawa Keisuke Museum (photo by the author)

Figure 66: Window of men's restroom, Serizawa Keisuke Museum (photo by the author)

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