

**THE TIME TO BE IN SEASON**

**Tadao Ando**

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I remember perfectly that exhibition at the Spanish Museum of Contemporary Art in the University City of Madrid. It was the spring of 1982. Tadao Ando was exhibiting his works for the first time in Europe. And he gave two lectures explaining his ideas at the Museum and at the School of Architecture. Many of us attended with great curiosity and interest. For that occasion, a small red publication was published, tracing the design of Oppositions in thin paper, which some of us now keep like gold in cloth. The texts, in Spanish, were by Frampton, Futagawa, Maki and, the basic one, by Campo Baeza, who was the one who organized all that. It was then that Meier, Botta, Siza, etc. came along, which, seen now, is surprising. As surprising is the reading now of that premonitory text that fits perfectly with the great exhibition that has taken place in the Arquería de los Nuevos Ministerio, in the months of April and May of this 1994.

We are living in a historical moment of enormous architectural interest. Faced with univocal conceptions of Architecture, already overcome, of unique truths and indisputable orthodoxies, we find ourselves in a situation in which it is accepted that in front of an architectural truth can be placed another truth opposed to the first. This, which is not admitting that everything is valid, is tremendously enriching. With this perspective, together with unavoidable personal preferences, the panorama opens up to an architecturally very diverse world.

The world of Japanese architecture, within these coordinates, had always been presented to us as very distant in many different aspects. The only figure known at all levels, Kenzo Tange, owes this knowledge to the great diffusion of his work. Masters such as Maki, Kikutake or Sinohara, who have developed a splendid architecture in recent years, are little known. In contrast, a more recent figure, Arata Isozaki, is more familiar to us because of the enormous publicity given to his work, which appears assiduously in all the well-known architectural magazines.

Tadao Ando, necessarily little known until now because of his age and the limited diffusion of his extensive work outside Japan, is a singular and important character.

If one follows the development of the work of young Japanese architects, one can get a first, superficial impression, where it seems that they all subscribe to similar starting points and arrive at very similar results: always exposed concrete, always large masses, always sobriety.

And I understand that the case of Tadao Ando is unique because he is a profound architect who, over and above those common denominators, plans in each work a global conception of Architecture and, in the manner of the great masters, resolves it with an unusual brilliance capable of surprising even those of us who deeply love Architecture.

His Azuma Residence, built in 1976, and awarded in 1980 by the Architectural Institute of Japan, has that exquisite elementarity that is only achieved after an elaborate refinement and absolute control over the parts and the whole, which manifests itself in a surprising result. One can sense the author's knowledge of his work millimeter by millimeter, and the perfect resolution of each element with absolute precision. He uses each material in its most complete expression, achieving a total unity. He shades the encounters, accentuates the continuities, dominates the light, what a great mastery of light! It seems incredible that so much can be said in such a small building.

The Glass Block Wall of 1979, evidences his concern for the understanding of the wall in Architecture (... the poet to the wall...), and when that wall is touched by the magic of Tadao Ando, it becomes a luminous sheet where a material such as pavés, used so often today without sense, manifests itself with an overwhelming logic. We deduce again surprised, that it could not be otherwise. The subtle transition between the most public and the most private spaces occurs with great naturalness.

In his latest published work, the Koshino Residence, he not only follows the ascending line of continuous effort to distill the purest essences of his concept of Architecture, but also Tadao Ando confirms himself as an architect who, already publicly recognized in his country, does not let himself be seduced by success and maintains an enviable architectural asceticism from which we can expect great works and the opening of great lines of action for our Architecture.

The light in the Koshino Residence does not slip through the cracks opened by the architect, but is invited, ceremoniously, to enter through the wisely perforated slots, to slide (the ceremony continues) through those walls whose texture has been meditatively established.

And that same spirit is manifested in all his works: the luminous membrane morosely curved in the Fuku Residence, where it falls to get out of it in the white temptation, the freshness of the assembly for the Exhibition of Contemporary Sculpture of Biwako in 1981 where the square of sand on the sand is introduced into the sea, to receive the kiss of the waves... And so many other works...

Only someone passionate about architecture is able to maintain that constancy in the effort to achieve these results that today we see as the most natural. It is that passion that we would like for all architects and the architectures that surround us. I hope that Tadao Ando's visit to Madrid in the spring of 1982, the reason for this publication, will serve to make his figure known, to deepen our understanding of his work and to become infected by this way of passionately understanding Architecture.

We bet on Tadao Ando with the conviction that he will become a universal master. This document, in the form of a catalog, is intended to give news of his work. For

many it will be the first contact, if not the last, with Architecture in its fullest meaning, by the hand of Tadao Ando.

"Tadao Ando. A Japanese universal architect".  
Madrid, spring 1982. Alberto Campo Baeza.

It is evident that that contact with Tadao Ando was the first, if not the last, for those of us who have followed the Japanese artist's work very closely.

Tadao Ando, as this great exhibition demonstrates, is already one of the leading stars in the firmament of contemporary architecture. He is already building all over the world. He is already building large-scale works. The most famous artists are already photographing his work. He already publishes in all the magazines. Books on his person and his ideas and his works and his dog are published non-stop. And he even appears in the Sunday papers. What more could one ask for? Everything dazzling. All overwhelming.

But I believe that, even if that text by Campo Baeza predicted all this, the speed of what has happened has not been adequate. Everything has gone too fast. I smell that the Spanish architect would have preferred a different ending for Ando. With another rhythm, with another tempo to set up everything that was promised there. Perhaps the results of the Ando of now (where the control of the scale? where the once rigorous study of the light? where the man as center?) are like some premature fruits. When the spring and the heats come too early, deceived, the trees bloom before their time. And if the deception continues, as if out of themselves, they produce abundant dazzling fruits. But empty. Bright in appearance, but empty. Not knowing what they are meant to taste like. They have lost their seasoning.

And the fact is that, also in architecture, they need an essential time. Perhaps this, Ando's work that we now see, is a substantial lesson on time, and calm, and silence and other issues necessary for architecture when it wants to be profound. When it wants to reach maturity, the time to be in season.

Emilio Eguiluz and Alberto Campo.